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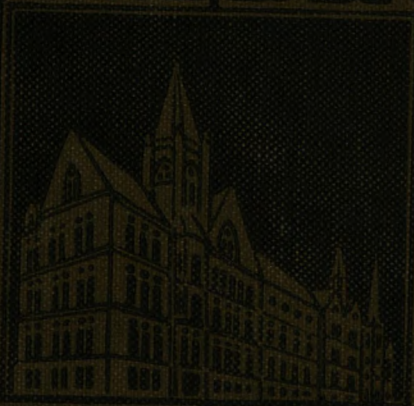
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SHADOWS LIFTED

By J. E. COPUS, S. J.
(CUTHBERT)





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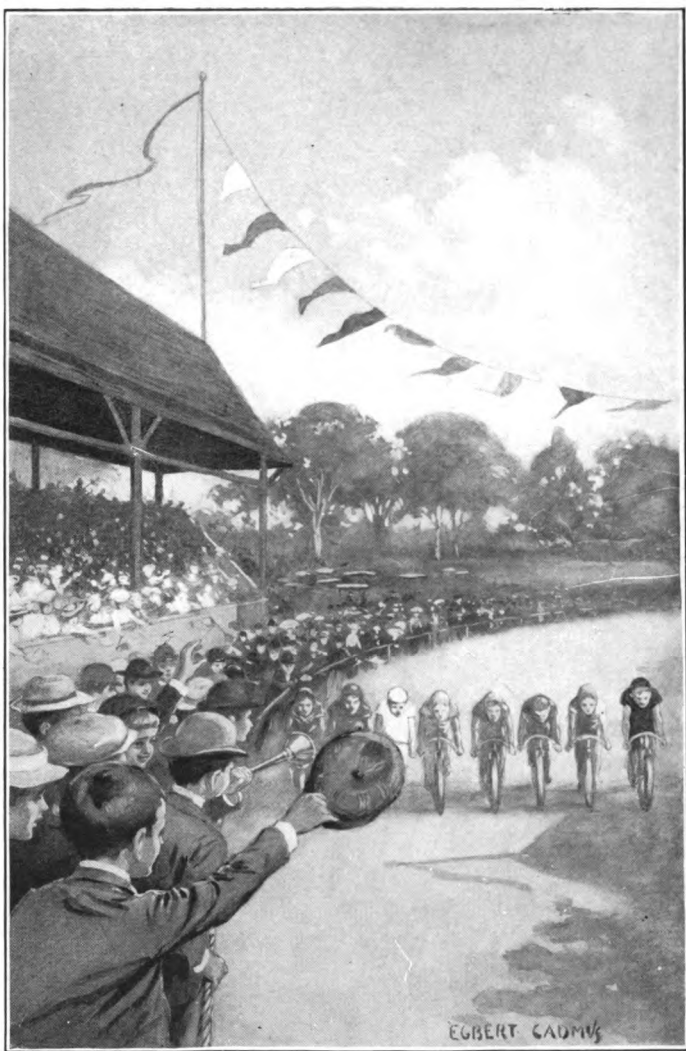
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"The eight bunched well together for the first half of the first round."—(See page 135.)

SHADOWS LIFTED

A Sequel to Saint Cuthbert's

BY

REV. J. E. COPUS, S.J.

[CUTHBERT]

*Author of "Harry Russell,"
"Saint Cuthbert's," etc.*



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Shadows Lifted.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER VACATION.

ALL day long, by various trains, boys were returning to old St. Cuthbert's college. In the yard there was much bustle and confusion and hurrying on this second Tuesday of September. Old boys, that is, those who had returned to college, felt, and were, perfectly at home. Many were taking advantage of the lax discipline of "first day" to do certain things with impunity, fully conscious that such attempts would not be tolerated a day or two hence, when routine had been once more established.

Every now and then a teamster would drive into the yard with a high load of trunks from the depot. These were eagerly pounced upon by their owners, who soon stowed them away in the trunk-room, in the far corner of the yard.

The Rhetoricians and the Philosophers, among whom we shall find our old acquaintances, had, with their superior experience, shipped their trunks before departing from their homes. These grave doctors in Israel had now merely to watch the bustle and noise and excitement of the less experienced newcomers, laughing at the mishaps of this one, teasing the more anxious, and not unfrequently lending a strong hand at lifting an unusually

heavy box, which was perhaps filled by mother and sisters with everything best calculated to cause the happy owner to become an inmate of the infirmary for many days to come.

Notwithstanding their vast, and to them immeasurably superior experience, the "old hands" among the boys—those who had already returned four or five times—felt the strangeness of the position. Love their college as much as they might—and, as those know who have read Howard Hunter's experiences, most of the boys with whom we are concerned did love old St. Cuthbert's with a love loyal and true—yet they felt that college was not home. Mother's sweet voice was not there, and sister's kindly ministrations were now for a time things only to be remembered.

"First day," no matter how often it is repeated, is, after all, a strange day in one's college life. The transition from the home life of the family circle to the necessarily stricter, public, and unrelaxing discipline of a college is always abrupt, and being so, it is unpleasant even to the most college-hardened youth.

On this particular occasion the old place looked unwontedly strange, for there was some impertinent grass actually growing right in the college yard—a pathetic token of a summer's neglect and desertion. It is the experience of most boys, when they see grass growing on their own special domain—the yard—on the first day of term, that they cannot help taking its presence there as a personal affront. Grass in the yard makes old boys feel "blue" and young boys downright homesick.

Mr. Hillson, the prefect, was particularly busy assigning beds in the dormitory, and selecting suitable desks

in the study-hall. The latter occupation was no easy task. Knowing how much the results of class-work depended on proper study, and how much good study depended on a suitable selection of desks in the study-hall and on suitable companions, the prefect was particularly anxious to put as few troublesome boys together as possible. He tried to scatter those known to be troublesome in such a way as to prevent them being a positive detriment to the better disposed and more studiously inclined.

The prefect of studies, with several assistants, was busy examining the newcomers and assigning them to the various classes according to their proficiency; the kindly, white-haired President held "open house" at his office, giving hearty welcome to the old students as they came flocking in to greet him, or kindly words of welcome and of warning to those who had just arrived for the first time.

Howard Hunter, Frank Stapleton, Harry Selby, and Rob Jones sat on a tilted bench outside the study-hall. Greetings among these old friends were over. They were now watching the number of new faces as the strangers wandered listlessly about amid their new surroundings.

"It's a gigantic shame," suddenly remarked Frank Stapleton vehemently.

"What is, Frank?" asked Hunter.

"Oh, everything! Look at that grass! eugh! Then look at those new boys. There doesn't seem to be a decent fellow in the lot. I don't believe Claude Winters is coming back either. And then to add to our misfortunes, I have just learned that Mr. Hillson is not going to stay this year. He told me he was going away to study to be a priest. Just as if they couldn't ordain him at

once and let him stay here. I'm sure he knows enough—why, he knows more than the President himself!"

The latter part of this boyish speech showed how highly Frank Stapleton esteemed Mr. Hillson's learning and abilities, for to the boys the President was Knowledge personified. The speech also indicated how little he knew of the requirements for the priesthood.

"Hold on, Frank," exclaimed Howard Hunter. "You are making out too strong a case every way. These new boys may not be so bad after all. Many of them, it is true, do not look very prepossessing, but let us wait until they get under college influence. Probably not one of them is as bad as you are inclined to paint him."

"Oh, I know you," responded the other. "You wouldn't let a certain personage be painted as black as he is."

"Humph! that's what you say. But what you say about Mr. Hillson is bad news indeed. Are you sure he is going to leave us?"

"Sure—he told me so just now," replied the other gloomily.

"He told me, too," said Rob Jones, "and I'm terribly sorry to hear it. If there's one man in the college that can keep me straight, it's Mr. Hillson."

"Nonsense, Rob," said Hunter; "you don't want any man to keep you straight, old fellow. You're straight enough yourself—now."

The last word was said slowly, and with hesitation.

"Now; that's just it, Howard. Straight enough now, but that is chiefly owing to Mr. Hillson, and you fellows. Suppose we were to get a new prefect with whom we couldn't get along?"

"We won't suppose anything of the kind," said Hunter;

"it isn't fair to the new man. Let's see who he is, and what he is like, and form our opinion afterward. But what makes you think Claude Winters is not coming back, Frank?"

"Because he isn't here," replied Stapleton. "This would be the sixth time he has come to college, and he has always come on the noon train of the first day, and now it's near five o'clock. There's the whistle of the last train from his direction. If he is not here in a quarter of an hour, I shall put it down that he is not coming."

"Why, here's Ambrose Bracebridge from Rosecroft Manor!" shouted Rob Jones, as the son of the Major walked into the yard.

The boys gave him a hearty welcome to St. Cuthbert's. As soon as the greetings were over they conducted their non-Catholic friend, first to the President, and then to the prefect of studies.

The President was much taken with the manly, gentlemanly appearance of Ambrose. He saw a well-made young fellow of about seventeen, neatly dressed, and bearing a fine, open countenance. His well-rounded face bore traces of good nurturing, without being at all fat or flabby. The jaw was strong and showed determination, which was emphasized by firm lips, which, when parted, revealed a handsome set of well-preserved, laughing teeth. An earnest look in the brown eyes gave a dignity to the bronzed face. The forehead was rather low and was ornamented with somewhat long, wavy hair, the roots of which grew far down in front. In a large city, Ambrose Bracebridge would easily have passed, had he worn more expensive clothing—which, by the way, he possessed, but had good sense not to bring to college—for one of those

golden youths of the modern club. But the President saw in him more than the mere society butterfly. The old gentleman thought he discerned here the makings of a fine, honest, sturdy man, and he determined that if careful training and much experience could do it, he would develop all the best talents of the boy before him. With what success the President's intentions met, this story has largely to do.

After a few kindly words of welcome the President dismissed him, saying :

"You do not come, Bracebridge, as a complete stranger to St. Cuthbert's. Your father's generous invitation to a dozen of our boys last June has made you more or less acquainted here. Keep the college rules. Study hard and play hard, and then I am sure you will be happy with us."

"I mean to be, sir," said the boy earnestly.

"That's right, that's right. Good-by, boys. Remember I shall always be glad to see you."

In this way they were dismissed to make room for others equally anxious to pay their respects to the head of the college. When outside the President's door, Frank Stapleton said to Bracebridge :

"One on you, old fellow."

"One what? What do you mean?"

"We all make breaks sometimes, don't we, Howard?" and there was the usual mischievous twinkle in Frank's eyes.

"Have I been guilty of any breach of etiquette? When? where? how?" asked Ambrose in real distress.

"Don't alarm yourself," replied Hunter; "you have no knowledge—as yet—of what a tease Stapleton is. What

he refers to is your addressing a priest as 'sir,' while a Catholic always says 'Father.' "

"Dear me, I am very sorry! Do you think the President is offended? I wouldn't have done it—indeed I didn't know—you see how it is: I am totally ignorant of your customs. Do you think he is offended? Shall I go and apologize? Tell me what to do, please."

The boys were delighted with Bracebridge's evident desire to make himself agreeable and not to give offense. The gentlemanly training he had received at home showed itself.

"It seems so strange to me to call any one who is not my father by the sacred name of father," said the boy.

"Because of the sacredness of the name, and by reason of the reverence in which we hold our priests on account of their sacred office, we give them that most sacred of all names," said Hunter. "It is the custom with us, and you will soon get used to it."

Stapleton's teasing humor, however, was in the ascendant at the moment. With a serious face he began again.

"I think, Ambrose, you had better go back, knock, enter, fall on your knees, and—"

"Rubbish," put in Jones, who saw that Bracebridge was taking the matter in earnest, "why, man, you couldn't offend the President if you tried."

This rather extravagant statement was taken for what it was worth by the new boy, whose fears now began to be allayed.

The four then invaded the office of the prefect of studies, but the "old boys" were ignominiously dismissed. Father Lovelace did not intend for a moment to expose the newcomer to the annoyance of a semi-public exami-

nation before he placed him in the class to which he should belong. Ambrose's friends retired, therefore, as gracefully as boys manage to do on such occasions.

In about ten minutes Bracebridge came out into the yard, bearing a card in his hand.

"What class?" asked his friends, excitedly.

"I'm sure I don't know. I don't know your system yet, you know," was the reply.

"I know, you know, that you don't know, you know, but as soon as I know I'll let you know, you know," said Stapeton, as he reached for the card.

But Jones was too quick. He seized it and read it.

"Great land of the snark!" he shouted.

"Is that on the card?" asked Hunter.

"No, but look at that, will you!"

Howard took the card and was surprised at what he saw. He read one word: "Rhetoric."

"How in the name of all that's rhetorical did you get that high class—and a new man, too!" asked Stapleton, in real surprise.

Such a thing had never been heard of before, that a new boy should be fit for the highest classical class in the college.

"How on earth did you do it?" asked Jones.

"I don't know, really. You see I graduated the year before last at a private semi-military academy in the East. There they certainly taught classics and mathematics well. Then, knowing that I was coming to St. Cuthbert's this year, I have been brushing up a bit during vacation, and so I found I could satisfy Mr. Lovelace."

"Satisfy whom?" asked Frank, in feigned horror.

"Oh, bother! I mean Father Lovelace. Really, gentle-

men, I hope you won't be offended with me when I make these mistakes. I'll get used to the proper titles in time."

The boys paid small regard to his mistakes, for just at that moment Rob Jones, in order to give an outward and adequate demonstration of the satisfaction he felt in having Ambrose Bracebridge as a classmate, and forgetting the dignity belonging to a Rhetorician, actually indulged in that most small-boy amusement of turning a hand-spring, which he did with as much abandon and as regardless of consequences as if he were one of the small boys with no tremendous weight of rhetorical dignity to sustain.

A ringing laugh at his expense followed his extravagant mode of expressing satisfaction, and his handsome sun-burned face flushed deeply as, busily rubbing the dust from the palms of his hands, he rejoined his companions.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW PREFECT.

By five o'clock the greater part of the hurry and excitement of "first day" had subsided. School affairs, so the boys thought, were assuming normal conditions with appalling rapidity. Often during the few hours since the reunion of our young friends had they discussed the possibilities with regard to the new prefect, an event in college life of more importance than changes of government or of dynasties.

All had agreed that, be he who he may, he could not be expected to be as much liked or as popular as was Mr. Hillson. This was a settled conviction among the larger

students. The boys believed that there was only one Mr. Hillson in all the wide world and they had him at St. Cuthbert's. And now they were to lose him! Oh, the pity of it! Their regret was in proportion to their love for him, and their love and confidence were very thorough, for he had the happy faculty of winning both.

Mr. Hillson had been five years at St. Cuthbert's, and the college had rarely seen a more successful manager of boys. It was almost entirely owing to him that such a splendid college spirit existed at the close of last year. It can easily be understood how anxious our friends were about his successor.

Many of the higher classes were old enough to remember Mr. Hillson's first year of prefecting at St. Cuthbert's. It was within their recollection how he had worked to create a real college spirit, not only in religious matters, but also in studies and in sports. They remembered how year by year he had weeded out the undesirable elements, and had brought the discipline to what it now was, an almost perfectly smooth-running machine—"smooth as a first-class wheel" as Claude Winters had remarked in the previous June.

There was a good deal of truth in Stapleton's grumbling remark that the newcomers in the large yard appeared to be anything but a desirable set. Howard Hunter, too, although he had put the best face on the matter, as was his wont in all doubtful cases, could not help surmising that had Mr. Hillson remained, even he would have found plenty of trouble this year.

Much, then, depended on the impression which the new prefect would make on the boys, and very much indeed on first impressions.

Just as our acquaintances began for the tenth time within the hour to offer conjectures about the new and unknown man who was to be so intimately connected with them for the next ten months, an active, business-like, broad-shouldered, pleasant-faced person came hurrying out of the college building, and almost ran into the group that was still standing around Bracebridge.

"How do you do, boys? How do, how do?" and he held out his hand. "Glad to make your acquaintances. Glad to be at St. Cuthbert's. Heard about it very often. Wanted to come very much. Old boys? Yes, yes, I could know that at a glance. Fine college, eh? Fine yard; fine boys, of course; yes, yes, all fine, very fine!"

Howard Hunter and his friends were at once captivated by his genial manner and his enthusiasm. They saw a round, smiling face. There was a merry twinkle in the eyes—eyes, nevertheless, which took in everything at a glance. Yet there was a kindly, warm-hearted look in them, too. The one peculiar feature of the face was a pair of large and over-hanging bushy eyebrows, which were partial curtains to eyes which at times were very scrutinizing, as many a boy in a school-boy scrape afterward learned.

The new prefect appeared to be a man always in a hurry, always immersed in business of importance. He moved rapidly, and spoke with force as one accustomed to give quick and important decisions, and to direct others. There was an air of good humor and enthusiasm about him that was contagious. Hunter and the other boys of the group were at once under its influence.

"Boys, I am going to tell you a secret," he continued; "tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ascalon!"

Would you believe me if I were to say that I am just the least bit blue—homesick!" and he laughed aloud.

The boys opened their eyes in real amazement. A member of the faculty of St. Cuthbert's homesick! Impossible! The prefect, of all persons in the world, blue! What was the world coming to?

The new man saw the look of amazement on their faces—on not a few he noticed an expression of incredulity. He burst out laughing again.

"I told you a secret, boys, and you must keep it. The fact is I have left a class of Rhetoric boys in the college where I was teaching last year whose equal I do not think can be found from Maine to California. Oh, they were splendid fellows! Such students, and such gentlemen, too! But I couldn't bring them with me, you know. Too bad, too bad!"

The listeners were not quite certain that the prefect was not quizzing them, yet they were certainly pleased with the loyalty he displayed toward his former pupils. They argued correctly that if he were loyal and enthusiastic about a former set of boys, he would be so about themselves too, in time, if they were deserving.

Bracebridge did not quite understand it all. His previous education had been managed on entirely different lines from those of St. Cuthbert's. He wisely kept quiet for a time. He was soon to learn the spirit of confidence and of respectful familiarity that existed between professors and prefects and the boys of St. Cuthbert's.

The others of the group had already mentally voted the new prefect a jolly good fellow.

"I hope you will find us, too, sir, fair specimens of college boys," remarked Harry Selby.

"I am sure I shall. Quite sure. Dear me, to hear all that Mr. Hillson says about some of you one would suppose that already wings had begun to sprout! Ha, ha! But then Mr. Hillson is partial, yes, very partial, yes, yes, very."

"But Mr. ——" began Frank the Fearless, and then he remembered that he had not yet heard the new prefect's name. He consequently stopped short in his speech, and, boy-like, blushed awkwardly.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, all of you," said the prefect. "I should have introduced myself at once. My name is Shalford—Joseph White Shalford."

The boys bowed.

"But, Mr. Shalford," urged Frank Stapleton, respectfully but freely, for the boys saw at once that they could talk without restraint—"but, Mr. Shalford, if Mr. Hillson is partial, what about a certain Rhetoric professor of last year in regard to—"

"Oh, you rogue!" exclaimed Mr. Shalford. "So you would catch me in my words at our first meeting! Yes, I confess I am partial to that class. They were the finest boys I ever knew; but that does not say there are no other good boys in the world, or no other good students, eh? Hello! look there. There's a poor little homesick fellow actually crying. That won't do. I must go and console him. Good-by, boys, we will soon get better acquainted."

"Good-by, sir," came the hearty chorus and the heartiness of the response convinced Mr. Shalford that he had already some friends among the boys.

In a few minutes the boys, who had watched closely, saw the little fellow, under the prefect's winning manner, dry his tears and begin to smile. It was not long before

they heard him break out into a hearty laugh—the best panacea for all schoolboy ills, and a mortal enemy to homesickness.

“Well, fellows, what’s the vote?” asked Stapleton, after he had cast a glance at the now silent group.

“I think he’s just splendid,” said Selby, enthusiastically.

“If I may be allowed to express myself intelligibly,” remarked Rob Jones, “I should say Mr. Shalford is a—”

“Brick!” broke in Stapleton. “Correct, go to the head of the class.”

“I think we shall get along splendidly with Mr. Shalford, eh, boys?” asked Howard Hunter.

“Look, look, gentlemen, see who is coming up the road from the station!” said Rob Jones.

All in the group turned to look in the direction pointed out. They saw a short, solidly built, neatly dressed boy, whose sturdy legs and square chest denoted an excellent physique.

“That’s Claude, for certain,” remarked Frank; “there’s not a boy in the yard who plants his feet more firmly when walking than he does.”

“Nor uses them faster when running away,” put in Selby. “Oh! the dear old fellow. Isn’t it grand that he’s back? Now our company is complete. ‘Rah for Claude!’”

“There’s something strange about him,” remarked Jones, who was closely watching the approaching figure. “How is he changed? He’s not the same Claude that left here last June, and who is that little fellow by his side, I wonder?”

“Wait till he comes closer,” said Hunter. “I cannot make out what the change is as yet. But there is one.”

"Great and little fishes! I have it," from Frank.

"What is it?" asked several.

"Pants!"

And so it was. Claude knew he was to be in the graduating class this year, and the day before he started for college he had put on long pants for the first time in his life. He had worn short knee-pants in the Rhetoric class and all his friends had declared that he had no sense of the fitness of things, no regard for the proper dignity of the class, no respect for his compeers; that he was bringing things down to the level of the kindergarten, etc., etc., but through all their bantering he remained firm. He would not give up his cool and comfortable black stockings and knee-breeches. His will was as sturdy as his thick, short legs. As the readers who have thus far followed Claude Winter's career are aware, Claude was by no means a dull boy. Certainly there was not a lazy bone in his body, and to his activity there was allied a corresponding determination of will. So he had borne all last year's chaffing and bantering with a firm resolve to go home as he had come, in short pants, or, as he preferred to call them, knee-breeches. Too appreciative of their comfort in vacation time, he had no thought of changing while by lake and wood, or climbing mountain paths. But the time came for returning to St. Cuthbert's and Claude had to make a decision.

His father, upon being consulted on this all-important step, amusedly left the decision to the boy, with the remark: "It is time for you to learn to make decisions for yourself."

His mother had as much reluctance to grant the permission as some mothers have to purchase the first razor

for the eldest boy. So Claude had to decide, and, truth to tell, from the time he made the decision up to the present moment he felt extremely awkward in trousers.

The boys watched him approach. In a hurried consultation they decided upon the manner of his reception. No one was to know him. All were to require an introduction.

By this time Claude was within thirty paces of the group of friends. He stopped a moment to speak to his diminutive counterpart by his side.

"Stay here just a moment, Ernest, and your brother will bring his friends over to you. You are not afraid, Ernie, are you?"

"N-no," came the doubtful answer; "but this place is so big and there are so many people here. It isn't a bit like home, and—mamma!"

"Of course it isn't like home, Ernie. It's college, you know. This is the great St. Cuthbert's college. Grand, isn't it?"

"Y-yes, but—"

"Well, you just wait here one minute. I won't be gone more than a minute. Be brave. Nobody will hurt you. You won't mind? You won't cry, will you?"

"No," and this time there was something like Claude's own firmness of will displayed in the reply.

"That's right. Only a minute," and Claude Winters bounded across the yard to his friends of last year, with eyes sparkling with pleasure, and his vacation-browned face one huge smile. With hands outstretched he began speaking before he reached the group. For the moment he had forgotten all about his uncomfortable long pants.

"Oh, how do, Frank! Awfully glad to see all you fel-

lows! How are you, Howard? Ah, Rob, glad to see you. How are you all? And Bracebridge! How do you do? My, it's fine to get back to St. Cuthbert's! Shake, old fellows."

He was greeted with a cold, expressionless stare by all.

Claude was astounded. He did not withdraw his hand, but stood with it outstretched, and with wide-open mouth.

Presently Stapleton, imitating one who uses an eyeglass, holding an imaginary one in its place, looked down on the stoutly-built small boy.

"Aw! ah! a stranger here, friends! Your name, if you please, sir?"

"Frank!" exclaimed Claude in surprise.

"Frank. Frank who, sir?"

"Oh, come, you fellows, what's the matter with you? As if you didn't know me!"

"Know you? How can we know—why I do declare, boys," said the actor, Stapleton, "if it isn't Claude—and in long pants!"

They all rushed around him. With a tremendous display of affection they pump-handled his arm until it was sore.

Under all this bantering and teasing, it must be understood, there was a genuine welcome to the late comer. Suddenly Stapleton struck an attitude of mock tragedy.

"Oh, shade of Shakespeare! look! look at his face!"

All turned and stared at Claude.

"What's the matter with my face?" he asked, as he quickly rubbed both cheeks, thinking that perhaps some mud or dust of the journey was disfiguring them.

"You can't brush it off, Claude. It's no use trying."

"Brush off what? You fellows seem to be losing your senses. What's up, now?"

"I'm sure it's positively against college rules. Let's go and see the President about it, boys. We can't stand this."

Claude was more mystified than ever.

"What on earth are you fellows driving at?"

"How many on a side, Claude?" asked one.

"Why, nine on a side, of course," said some one else.

"Two nines, enough for a game of ball."

Then Claude blushed outright. He was now conscious they were quizzing him on the incipient mustache, which, during the vacation, had begun to make its appearance.

"Oh, I say, you fellows, you—but never mind. Wait a minute until I bring my little brother over here. I want you to make him feel at home."

"Do, Claude," said Selby. "You must be a perfect pagan to leave the little fellow standing all alone in a strange place."

Claude Winters turned and looked toward the spot where he had left his brother standing. He was gone. He scanned the large boys' yard. Not seeing him, he ran in haste over to the small division yard. There was not a trace of Ernest Winters.

CHAPTER III.

A MYSTERY FOR CLAUDE.

CLAUDE WINTERS went to the spot where he had left his younger brother. Not finding him there he surmised that he had already formed acquaintance with some of the boys

of the junior division. He soon found that no one there had seen him.

"The youngster became tired of waiting. He must have started out to inspect the buildings, I suppose," thought Claude. Acting upon this idea, he began a systematic search. Going first to the President's room, and then to that of the prefect of studies, he next went through all the class-rooms, visited the gymnasium, reading-room, bath-rooms, game-rooms, study-halls, infirmary, chapel, and finally went to each professor's room. He could find no trace of the missing boy.

Winters now began to be anxious. One of the professors suggested that Ernest might have wandered toward the kitchen. Claude ran there. Barely taking time to shake hands with the serving-boys, with whom he was a great favorite, he went from kitchen to sculleries, pantries, dairy, bake-shop, shoe-shop—everywhere, but Ernest was nowhere to be found. Claude returned to his friends in the yard and told them of the sudden and mysterious disappearance of his younger brother.

Immediately all was excitement. The most extravagant conjectures were indulged in. No one seemed to be able to offer any solution to the problem.

While the boys were earnestly discussing the difficulty, Mr. Shalford approached unobserved.

"Well, boys, what's the matter? You all look as scared as if you had seen a ghost. There's been no quarrel, eh? No disagreement among you boys, that's sure. What's wrong?"

He was told the cause of their uneasiness. Mr. Shalford liked Claude's appearance and open, frank countenance.

"If your brother is like you," he said kindly to the anxious boy, "you may be sure he is not in mischief, wherever he may be."

Claude loved Mr. Shalford from that day.

"Ah!" continued the prefect, "I have it! You walked from the railway depot—you two—did you not? Yes; well, he saw that candy store half way between here and the station, and, as I suppose he has some money in his pocket yet, that must have been the attraction. Run, Winters, and see if he is not there making himself sick with pies and tarts."

Just as the big college bell rang for supper Claude ran in hot haste up the road to the candy store. He burst into the little shop:

"Have you got my brother here, Mrs. Lane?"

"Why, no, Master Claude. I ain't seen no brother of yours whatever. Never knew you had one. Do you want some of my taffy to-day?"

"Oh, hang your candy. I have lost my brother! You are hiding him behind the counter there."

"Lawks sakes, Master Claude, what you do be sayin'! There ain't no brother of yours ever come here this day. Come behind the counter and see for yourself."

"Excuse me, ma'am," said the boy immediately, like the true little gentleman he was; "I forgot myself. I cannot think where he has gone. I do hope no harm's come to him. If you see a little boy that looks like me—"

"How is he dressed?" interrupted the woman.

"He has on a black velvet Sunday coat, with silver buttons, and a broad linen collar, with black stockings and low shoes. He's got long black curly hair, and a 'shanter' hat. And oh! if you catch sight of him, let us know, won't you?"

If you find him, perhaps it's best to keep him here and send some one to the college."

"That I will, sure, if ever I sets my eyes on him. Here, Master Winters, take some of these," and the sympathetic woman thrust into his hand some of the newly made "taffy."

In spite of his troubles Claude was too much of a boy to refuse the candies. Hastily thanking the donor he at once ran home again at full speed.

By this time there was considerable excitement in the yard. The word was passed hurriedly from mouth to mouth that Claude Winters' little brother was lost. What made his rediscovery more difficult from the boys' point of view, was that no one knew the lost boy, as yet no one had seen him, and there were many new faces on the junior division on the first day of term.

A search party was suggested by Roy Henning. With the permission of Mr. Shalford three or four small groups were organized to go in different directions. Mr. Hillson, who knew the country better than the new prefect, gave directions to each group. Claude did not leave the grounds. Again and again he ran through the various rooms and halls of the college, as well as through all the out-buildings and offices and even the barns and stables of the farm. The four search parties were to return by nine o'clock. If by that time there were no traces of the missing boy, then some of the workmen and farm hands were to continue the search farther afield on horseback. Telegrams were sent up and down the line, as it was possible that Ernest Winters had been enticed to take a ride on a hand-car by some repair men who were known to be working in the neighborhood.

About nine o'clock all the unsuccessful searchers returned. The workmen were at once dispatched, with special instructions to look out for tramps and vagrants.

About ten o'clock that night the President turned the light low in his room, and walked to the door of the prefect of studies, to have a further consultation on the very mysterious affair. Father Lovelace suggested that Claude's father be telegraphed to, but to this the President objected, saying that there would be time enough for that in the morning should the boy not be found by that time. By wiring at once it would be uselessly alarming the family without putting them in a position to render the slightest assistance. If some accident had happened to Ernest Winters, bad news would travel fast enough.

While the two priests were talking together, they heard the clatter of horses' hoofs along the hard gravel road. Some of the workmen were returning. The two went to the door.

"Any tidings?"

"Not the slightest trace, Father," was the reply.

The two men were completely mystified. That a boy, in broad daylight, from amid a crowd of over two hundred and fifty, should be wafted away as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up—such a thing had never come within the experience of either.

They talked in a low tone, so as not to disturb other members of the faculty living on the same corridor, who had long ago retired to rest. Suddenly in the stillness of a hot, close, September night, the two priests heard a strange voice:

"That's mine; gimme my hat! Oh, what a big crowd of boys! Now I lay me down to—" The sentence ended in

some indistinct mumbling. In a second later the words "pray for us sinners," were heard, then more indistinct mutterings, which soon sank into the silence of sleep. Some one had been disturbed by the clatter of the horses' hoofs as they had approached the college.

The President and his subordinate stared at each other in mute surprise.

"Where on earth did that sound come from?" enquired the former.

"From the Bishop's room," answered Father Lovelace. "Wait till I get a light."

The Bishop's room was situated between the rooms of the President and the prefect of studies. It was, of course, the best furnished room in the college, being reserved for the bishop of the diocese, or any other particularly honored guest.

The door stood ajar. With the light held above their heads, the two cautiously entered the room. What was their surprise when they saw a boy fully dressed, with his beads around his neck and resting on his now sadly crumpled broad collar, fast asleep on the large bed.

The sleeper was Ernest Winters.

The two men gently removed the boy's shoes. They then put him into bed without awakening him.

Father Lovelace then went to find Claude, to tell him of the discovery, and thus put the now almost frantic boy's mind at rest. All the boys had gone to bed except Howard Hunter, who had been permitted, as the one best fitted to soothe his anxiety, to keep Claude company. Father Lovelace found both kneeling at the altar-steps and reciting their beads. Like the true Catholic boys they were, they had sought strength and relief at the tabernacle door.

As may well be supposed, Ernest was the hero of the hour the next morning. He had to tell the story of his sudden disappearance over and over again. We give the story as he told it to his brother the next morning.

"Why, Ernie, where have you been?" asked Claude, as the boy jumped out of the Bishop's bed ready dressed.

"I don't know, Claude. I can't remember much. But he had such big black eyes, I had to follow him."

"Who had big black eyes?"

"The tall, dark-looking man. He looked just like the picture of the Hindu pa has at home in the dining room."

"What are you talking about? That picture has a big white turban that comes down over the ears. There isn't anybody who dresses like that in this country. I guess you have been dreaming."

"No, indeed, I wasn't dreaming. When you left me standing alone when you went to speak to those big boys, I felt like crying because I felt lonesome and I didn't know anybody. You were gone ever so long. I got tired and began to look around."

"Why, Ernie, I wasn't away from you two minutes," said Claude; but the fact was that he was away for more than ten, although the time did not appear so long to him.

"Well?"

"Then, when I looked around, I saw this tall, dark man with big eyes just around the corner of that smaller house there"—and Ernest went to the window and pointed to the infirmary, which was separated from the main building of the college—"and I was afraid, but his eyes drew me on and I could not help going toward him. 'What is your name?' he asked in such a funny, solemn way. I told him Ernest Winters. Then he said 'Ah!'"

"How was he dressed?" asked Claude.

"Just like pa dresses when he leaves home and goes to New York once a year."

"What happened then, Ernie?" inquired Claude.

"He beckoned me on, and I felt as if I were in a dream. At the gate down there, see,"—and he pointed out of the window—"there was a carriage. Without saying a word we got in, and the carriage drove off. All the time he kept his big eyes on me and I didn't dare move. Soon we came to a big house—I think it was a hotel—and without saying a word, we left the carriage and went in and up stairs into a beautiful room with large looking-glasses all around the walls. I stood in the middle of the carpet without knowing why I was there or what he wanted of me. All the time I hadn't spoken a word.

"Then he left me and went through a door covered all over with looking-glass and I was alone. Then I began to be frightened and wanted to cry—but I didn't. In about a minute, the same man came back. All the time he was there I could only look at his eyes and when I did that it seemed as if I couldn't do anything else."

"What did you do next?" asked Claude with breathless interest.

"He clapped his hands, suddenly, without speaking a word and another door opened—one of those looking-glass doors—and another person, dressed just the same as he was, came in with a tray on which were fruits and a bottle of water. When the servant had put down the tray he made a low bow, like those we read of in the Arabian Nights, and then stood with his arms folded across his breast. I guess the fellow with the big eyes was the boss, and the other the servant."

"All this time neither of them spoke!" said Claude. "Look here, Ernie, I guess you have been dreaming and are now telling me a fairy story out of your Arabian Nights. You know you were reading it only this week."

"No, cross my heart, Claudie. Then the funniest thing happened. First place, he,—the big-eyed fellow,—took his eyes off me, and then I didn't mind. Then the two began to say something I couldn't make out, but it sounded awful funny, just like the conjurer fellows use when they do their tricks. They mixed a few English words with their funny talk, and I seemed to make out that Big Eyes was asking the other something about me. The servant appeared to deny what the other fellow was saying. I am sure I caught the words 'not old enough,' 'too small,' 'should be twenty.'"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Claude, with a laugh, "perhaps those fellows are after me. You know, Ernest, I shall be twenty next Christmas. But what followed?"

"Somehow they didn't seem to agree. Then, with many bowings and scrapings, the smaller man went out of the room backward."

"What followed then, Ernest?"

"Big Eyes walked up and down the room several times. Then he went to the table and poured out some of the water from the bottle and put a white powder in the glass. It fizzled up. Then he stroked my head quite kindly and offered me the glass."

"Did you drink it?"

"Yes."

"What did it taste like?"

"Something like that sherbet papa once gave us at home."

"What then?"

"That's all."

"That's all? What do you mean, Ernie? How did you get back here, and into the Bishop's room of all places in the college?"

"Oh, Claudie, I don't remember anything more till I woke up this morning. Isn't this the room I am going to have? It isn't half as nice as our room at home any way."

Claude laughed aloud. He assured his brother most emphatically that it was not the room he would occupy. He promised that after breakfast he would show him his bed in the dormitory.

It is needless to say that Claude Winters wrote a full account of this strange occurrence to his father, but while he is waiting a reply from his father—a letter which is to contain very important information for our young friend—we will make the acquaintance of several of the new boys of the large yard, as several of these bright and delightful youngsters will have to enter into the history of this year at St. Cuthbert's.

CHAPTER IV.

CLARENCE GILKINS.

MR. JOSEPH WHITE SHALFORD, prefect of the large division, stood talking to his assistant on the morning after the occurrences we have related in the last chapter. There was a satisfied look on his face. Claude Winters was telling the two officials the curious story he had heard

before breakfast from his brother. When the boy had finished, he said:

"Don't you think it all very strange, sir? If Ernie had not told me all this himself I wouldn't have believed it, but he never tells a lie."

"That's good. Yes, it's strange indeed. Where is he now?"

"Over in his own yard, sir. May I go, please, and show him his bed in his dormitory?"

"Yes, if the small division prefect will permit you. As you go, Winters, send that tall fellow, who is leaning against the corner of the candy-store, to me. Do you see the boy I mean?"

"Yes, sir. I'll send him to you," and Claude ran at full speed across the yard and almost into the boy for whom he had the message.

"Say, Cornstalks, the prefect wants you. Better hurry up, he's waiting for you," was his greeting to the new boy.

"The what?" asked the boy.

"The prefect, the manager of this menagerie, the boss. See, there he stands waiting for you. Better hurry."

"Don't know as I will. If he wants me he had better come for me."

"My goodness! does it hurt?" asked Claude, apparently with great solicitude.

"Does what hurt?"

"Why, that bad temper."

"I'll show you whether it hurts," and he made a vicious kick at Claude's shins, but as he had his hands buried deeply in his pockets he was not quick enough for the smaller boy, who jumped away and began chaffing him

- most unmercifully, relying on the swiftness of his legs in case of any attack.

The big boy sauntered over to where the prefect was waiting for him, his hands still in his pockets and his hat well down over his eyes.

"What is your name, my boy?" asked Mr. Shalford in a kindly way, as the boy shambled up to him.

"Gilkins."

"Gilkins what?" asked the prefect, as he gave the boy a piercing glance from under his bushy eyebrows—a glance which the boy perfectly understood, although he gave no indications that he did.

"Gilkins nothing," answered the boy impudently.

"Oh, yes it is, you know," and there was a look in the prefect's face which was a revelation to the boy, who saw at once the man before him was master and would stand no trifling.

"Gilkins what?" came more sternly.

"Gilkins,—sir."

"Ah! And what is your Christian name?"

"Clarence,—sir."

"Ah! What a nice name. What a pity to have so nice a name and so ugly a temper—one of the finest names in all history. Now, Clarence Gilkins, go to the wash-room and put on a necktie."

"I don't want no—" began the boy.

"Go!" and the prefect pointed sternly toward the door. There was a force in the gesture and a determination in the tone which were again revelations to Gilkins and to the boys standing around. Whatever might happen the boys saw that Mr. Shalford was not to be trifled with. The boy went.

In about ten minutes he returned wearing a flaring red tie. He had evidently put it on to vex the prefect. In this he failed. As soon as Mr. Shalford saw Gilkins emerge from the wash-room, he went over to him, and shook hands.

"Ah, that's something like, my boy. Always try to dress neatly. See, all our boys pride themselves on their natty appearance and—taste."

The shot, however, was lost on Gilkins.

"Did you enjoy it?" suddenly asked the prefect.

"Enjoy what? I mean, what, sir."

"Oh, come, my boy, let's be friends. You are not such a bad fellow if you only knew it. Did you enjoy your extra smoke? There now—don't blush. Besides, I can smell the smoke on you now. It didn't take twelve minutes to tie that tie, that's sure. I think if I were a boy and had the same chance as you had for an extra smoke, I'd take it, too. Wouldn't you, boys?" he said, suddenly turning to the bystanders.

Many laughingly responded in the affirmative.

"I don't doubt but what you would," responded the prefect, dryly.

Gilkins began to think that Mr. Shalford was "not so bad" after all, and that perhaps it would be just as well to keep on his good side. Like many another improperly trained boy, he had allowed himself, unfortunately, to believe that every one in a position of authority was his natural enemy. He had taken it for granted that Mr. Shalford was so, and was now more or less surprised to learn that he could enter exactly into a boy's own manner of thinking about things.

By a movement, which the boys who had gathered

around the two quickly understood, Mr. Shalford intimated that he wished to talk to Gilkins privately. When the rest had dispersed Mr. Shalford said kindly:

"I hope you will be happy and contented here, Clarence."

"Guess I won't though, if everybody is going to be down on me, like they were at my last school," said the boy.

"But, my dear lad, there is no one here who has the slightest intention of doing any such thing. I suppose people were 'down on you' as you express it, because you didn't behave well and broke the rules and did all sorts of things."

"Who told you all that?"

"No one. I do not know where you were last year, and I do not care to know. I only judge from my knowledge of boys, and from the way you express yourself."

"Well, sir, I expect you will soon be the same as all the others were toward me."

There was a strange pathos in the tone. It indicated many things—previous misunderstanding of his nature, blunders which had made his education almost a tragedy, and a longing, a desire for better things and a fresh chance. Mr. Shalford saw all this. He replied:

"I see no reason why I should. It rests entirely with yourself. Make me your friend and make a reasonable effort to keep straight, and you will be as happy as a king. By the way, do you play ball? Are you any good at football?—you know the practice season opens in a few days."

"I was center rush on our team last year."

"Capital! You are big and strong enough to make a good one. In training at all now?"

Gilkins put his fingers to his head and flicked his arm muscles.

"Good! Muscles as hard as iron! First rate. Why, man, if you watch yourself, you will be an acquisition to St. Cuthbert's yet."

The boy felt pleased at the interest taken in him. He began to talk freely about matches, and gridirons, and all the technicalities of football. Matters began to look different to him. Instead of being exiled from home as a covert punishment for unmanageableness, Gilkins began to see that it was quite possible that the year might prove a most enjoyable one to him after all. He felt as if he were going to get a "fair show" as he called it. Under such pleasant conditions his better nature came uppermost, and he surprised himself by the following remark:

"I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Shalford: You are just the first man that ever spoke to me like that, and I'm going to try to get along."

"That's a good resolution. Try hard to keep it. By the way, Clarence, when did you go to Communion last?"

"I made my Easter, and—and—"

"I see, my boy, I see it all. For six months you have foolishly been neglecting the very means to enable you to do right and be happy and contented. Well, we'll change all that, won't we? And remember, my dear boy, I expect great things from you."

The conference ended by the prefect tactfully securing a promise from Gilkins that some time during the day he would make a visit to the venerable chaplain or spiritual director of the boys. The prefect knew very well that if this zealous old Father once got a boy under his influence everything would soon be all right with him.

Clarence Gilkins was of an unamiable disposition. He had the unhappy faculty of showing his very worst side to others. A heartless system of harshness at home had stunted all the boy's aspirations and destroyed his ideals. Nor were matters at all mended during the two years he had spent at school previous to his coming, this year, to St. Cuthbert's. Already marks of hardness and of cynicism were beginning to show in rather strong lines around the mouth and habitually tightened lips. At a casual glance, a stranger would call him a "tough" boy. He was so in a certain way, but it was mostly on the exterior. The heart was in the right place.

He was big, awkward, loose-jointed. His clothes did not fit him well. He had not as yet acquired those habits of neatness in dress which make so much for self-respect. Unquestionably he had many faults, and we shall have to chronicle many of his failings. Behind all this array of undesirable qualities there were latent many good ones, and it required just such experience as his prefect possessed to bring them to the surface.

About an hour later Gilkins once more approached Mr. Shalford. This time the prefect noticed that his hands were not in his pockets, and he also observed that the boy touched his cap, as was the general custom, when he spoke to the prefect.

"Would you mind lending me the key again, sir?" Without inquiring why he wanted it, the prefect immediately handed it to him. The boy at once realized he was trusted. He was pleased. In two minutes he returned. The flaring red tie had been removed, and one much neater and of a more sober color had been substituted. The reader may regard this as a small matter and scarcely

worth recording, but Mr. Shalford saw its full significance.

"I'm not much of a critic in high art colors, but unquestionably necktie number two is an improvement," he said laughingly, as he again pocketed the key.

The boy walked away with a satisfied smile on his face.

"He'll do, if others do not influence him too much," said the prefect to himself. Gilkins walked slowly back to his companions. He was thinking deeply. He had taken a liking to the prefect. He was determined to keep the promise he had made to see the chaplain. But this he knew meant confession, ultimately, and confession meant the breaking away from a class of boys whom he had become acquainted with only yesterday, but who, he had already learned, would for the present, neither go to confession, nor be much influenced by him if he were to try to set them an example of keeping straight.

In his heart of hearts he felt that he was not an altogether bad boy. In a dim sort of way he realized that circumstances had been against him: that his chance companions had often been undesirable ones: that the mistaken home training of harshness and repression with all its unpleasant consequences had been a misfortune for him. He could not have stated these feelings so clearly as they are set down here, but in some confused manner he felt them.

The kindly manner of the prefect; his evident intention to trust him, and, if he himself did not prevent it, to make him happy and contented for the school year, touched him deeply. It aroused within him a desire to recover his self-respect; to make a vigorous effort to rise out of the slovenly, ungentlemanly habits into which he had drifted.

"By Jove!" he said, half aloud, and then checking himself—"humph! my patron saint at all events for some time past! Guess I'll drop that way of talking any way. It seems to me that with a man like that Shalford to look after a fellow there is no reason for me to go to the dogs. Guess I won't, either."

Now these resolutions, good in themselves, were natural, and were valuable in so far as his natural determination bore him up. By many a breakdown, by many a lapse and fall, he was to learn they were not sufficient of themselves. It took Gilkins a long time to look to other and more real source of strength than his own will alone, and it caused him many a bitter day, many a hard, hard struggle before he arrived at the knowledge that it was not safe to trust himself or to rely solely on his own natural powers, in order, as he expressed it, "not to go to the dogs."

However, under the influence of his present good resolutions he did the correct thing. Instead of returning to the crowd of discontented and more or less maliciously inclined boys with whom he had so far associated, he walked over to where Roy Henning, Selby, and Stapleton were talking over the prospects of the coming football season.

Just as he arrived from one direction Claude Winters came from another. They met face to face. Claude was a little frightened and feared for the consequences of their first meeting. He was just a little ashamed at his own rather rude way of addressing a stranger, but he put on a bold face on the matter.

"Say, Gilkins, what did the prefect say to you?"

"Look here, young fellow, I don't want you to call me 'cornstalks' or any other name any more, d'ye hear?"

"I hear; but what did Mr. Shalford say, anyway?"

"No matter. He's a fine man, and I'm going to get along with him."

"Shake, old fellow. That's the talk," said Claude; "but what a pity you can't play on the gridiron this fall. You are big enough and strong enough to break through any line."

And Winters, after the fashion of the young Roman who bet his sesterces on the gladiator, began to pat Gilkins' muscular arm.

The new boy did not know what to make of Claude. He was half-inclined to think he was being patronized. He felt his pulse quickening with anger. Stapleton took in the situation at once.

"Shut up, Winters—let him alone, can't you? You mustn't mind him, Gilkins. Here, you know," and Frank touched his forehead with his forefinger as if to indicate that Claude was not quite sound in the head.

Winters clenched his fists, making pantomime motions at Frank as if he would presently annihilate him.

"All right, Claude. I understand. Pistols and coffee for two to-morrow morning before breakfast," he said laughingly. "All the same, if you'll excuse us, Gilkins and I want to talk of football matters," and Stapleton walked off with his newly found acquaintance.

CHAPTER V.

A WONDER WORKER.

ABOUT a year before Ernest Winters' strange disappearance at St. Cuthbert's college, a number of people had gathered on a hillside, close to the ruins of a temple of Brahma, not many miles from Simla, in northern India. Professional Hindu beggars, squalid and in tatters, and carrying empty rice bowls, were there. They wore the yellow robes which distinguished them as holy mendicants. Tall, lithe, dark-skinned and straight-featured men were also there, with yards upon yards of fine Indian muslin rolled turban-fashion around their heads, leaving only the lobe of the ears visible. Many wore white, flowing robes reaching to their feet. The white garments lent, by contrast, a brilliancy to the rich Oriental coloring of the various costumes which gave a variety and picturesqueness to the scene.

There were not many Europeans present. Here and there could be seen the redcoat of the British soldier, whose round, red face would indicate his nationality, even without the assistance of his conspicuous uniform. On a few tanned and sun-darkened faces could be distinguished the genuine imperial and goatee of the typical sharp-featured and polite Frenchman. Two long-coated Germans were stolidly smoking china pipes with evident satisfaction. Most of the gathered crowd were expectant. While waiting, many of the natives sat cross-legged on the ground indulging in the fascinating narghile, and if one stood near enough, he could hear the smoke bubbling

through the bulb, and observe with what delight the smoker enveloped himself in a cloud of deliciously perfumed tobacco smoke.

To some of the company assembled the gathering appeared to have the significance of a religious ceremonial, but by far the greater number had come together for purposes of amusement. No people under the sun are so fond of the wonderful and the inexplicable as are the natives of India. They revel in mysticism, provided it be not of too violent a kind. The genius of the people tends to that "Nirvana where the silence reigns"—to rest and to indolent repose. Nevertheless there are no people on earth that delight more in the wonderful, and the present gathering composed chiefly of Hindus, had congregated in the blazing sun for no other purpose than to witness some extraordinary feats of jugglery which a famous wizard had announced he would show them.

The sightseers were arranged in the form of two-thirds of a circle, the remaining third being occupied by a moderate-sized tent of black goat-hair cloth, before which was erected a low platform about two feet high.

The great conjurer appeared apparelled in a red fez and a flowing black robe ornamented profusely with hieroglyphic and cabalistic designs in gold and crimson threads. He held in his hands a short, white, polished wand.

The performance commenced with the ordinary legerdemain tricks, such as the clever manipulation of swords, of brass balls, of spinning plates and a pretty butterfly trick. This latter performance seemed to please the audience very much. Taking tissue paper of various colors the performer deftly manufactured some paper butterflies. By a gentle movement of his fan he set them in motion,

made them hover around his head, settle on his left hand, hover again and settle on a bouquet of flowers. Finally he fanned them high into the air and a slight breeze wafted them among the audience to the intense satisfaction of those who could secure one of them.

After some snake-charming, the wizard came to the most important part of his entertainment.

Producing a long sack, which was capable of holding a man, he showed it to the audience, turned it inside out several times and beat it on the floor of the platform. Then he clapped his hands and an assistant appeared clothed in the scantiest of garments, consisting of the Hindu hip-cloth of the water-men of the rivers.

This man entered the sack which the conjurer held. The conjurer then tied the sack over the assistant's head. He then began to ring violently a good-sized hand-bell. While doing this the wizard's eyes shone brilliantly, giving him a strangely fascinating appearance.

Untying the sack the occupant's head just appeared enveloped in a large white turban. As the folds of the sack fell from his shoulders it was seen that he was dressed in a full white flowing robe. The audience were much astonished when the whole figure was revealed, to discover that the assistant, now fully costumed, held in one hand a dish of cooked rice actually steaming, and in the other a candlestick containing a lighted candle.

The next trick was even more startling. The performer went to his tent and brought out a wicker-basket, large enough to hold his assistant. The basket was placed upon the ground, the lid thrown open and was moved about in various positions so that every one could see that it was a real basket, and empty. While it was being shown to the

audience, the assistant stepped to the stage and stood in one corner with arms folded across his breast, motionless as a statue.

The wizard, placing the basket in the middle of the stage, invited, by gestures, the other to enter it. The latter refused, with evident anger which could be seen in his large black eyes. The wordless entreaty continued for some little time, but the smaller man remained obdurate. He would not move. The conjurer, in anger, ran to the tent and brought out a dangerous looking Damascus blade, with which he threatened the other, who, however, did not appear to be much concerned.

Seeing he could effect nothing by threatening, he threw down the sword and recommenced his blandishments and persuasive gestures. The other began to relent. He looked at the basket, to the intense satisfaction of the principal actor. All this time, and throughout the wonderful performance no word was spoken.

The assistant looked at the basket again, stepped nearer to it, and finally consented to get into it. The black-robed master of magic was suave and genial now, but as soon as the man was fairly within the basket his manner changed. He hurriedly and angrily closed the lid, fastening the hasp with a stout, wooden peg so that it could not be opened from the inside.

It was evident to the audience that, as soon as the assistant had entered the wickerwork-basket and had seen his master close the lid on him, he had repented of his acquiescence, for all could hear him striking the under part of the lid. He bent the willow lid in his efforts to get free.

This seemed to make the magician still more angry.

His eyes glared angrily. His whole body shook with passion as he paced up and down the small platform. Every moment his anger was rising, and his passion becoming less under his control.

Suddenly, in his frantic rage, he caught sight of the sword where he had thrown it. Seizing it he rushed to the basket, which he pierced. When he withdrew the sword it was dripping with blood. An unearthly, agonizing shriek followed—such a shriek that it made many of the dark faces of those who were witnessing the strange proceeding, turn several shades lighter. Many believed that the magician had suddenly gone insane. All were sure that he had massacred his faithful assistant. The audience rose to its feet at the horror of the situation. Some were calling aloud, others were trembling, and not a few would have rushed to the stage to secure the murderer.

The sight of blood on the sword served only to enrage him the more. Again and again did he thrust the sharp instrument through the wickerwork, and each thrust was responded to by a fresh shriek until at last they died away. The assistant's life had evidently been sacrificed to a momentary insane fury of his master.

There was the intensest excitement among the natives. A hurried consultation was held by about a dozen of the more prominent members of the village community. They hastily decided upon the conjurer's capture. Some made a rapid movement toward the platform.

The now perspiring actor ran to the front of the stage, and threw down the blood-stained sword. Immediately he returned to the basket. Undoing the fastening, he tilted it on end, with the lid toward the excited audience. He then opened it.

The basket was empty!

A reaction followed. The sightseers stared in astonishment at the wonder worker. Never had they seen anything half so marvelous. To add to their amazement a moment later the assistant walked from the tent, smiling and bowing. The two clever performers went to the front of the platform and made a profound salaam. The performance was over.

Among the audience was a sharp, business-like native of the United States. He was one of those men who can be found in almost any part of the world. He was shrewd and keen, with an eye ever open to the main chance. He was a purchaser of elephants, lions, and other wild animals, engaged Albanians for dime museums, could drive hard bargains in live snakes, and was ever on the lookout for curios and freaks. The only American in the audience was an agent for a large amusement syndicate in New York.

"I do declare," he said, half aloud; "if I could only get those two men to come to the United States, they would make a tremendous hit. I would give them their own terms—almost. They'd be the greatest thing of the season, sure."

He determined to make an engagement with them, if possible, but he knew that would take some time. Business matters in India—especially outside the larger cities—do not move as rapidly as on Broadway, New York. He knew, also, that he would have to procure the consent of the chief, or head man of the village, if he wished to avoid much opposition and perhaps have the neighboring English garrison about his ears. He set about "interviewing" the chief at once, which resulted in a somewhat lighter

purse and an arrangement to meet the two clever jugglers at the chief's bungalow that evening as soon as the moon had risen.

When the moon was flooding the landscape with a soft, hazy light, touching with silver every palm leaf, and beautifying the daylight unsightliness of the village, the American agent went to the bungalow of the village chief. He paid little attention to the exquisite saffron hues on the western horizon, or to the black wall of night in the east, or to the moon itself, which appears so near the earth in these regions. His mind was too full of the project of securing "attractions" for American pleasure-seekers to give much attention to the charms of nature.

"Will the Sahib be pleased to enter?" said a soft-voiced coolie, as the Westerner neared the chief's house.

"I will that," he replied emphatically. "Just tell your boss that Peter Jenkinson has arrived."

The servant bowed and went into the house, reappearing an instant later.

"The Sahib will be pleased to follow. The master waits."

Mr. Jenkinson was shown into a large, rather low room, decorated with Indian art muslin. On the walls were ornaments of shields, spears, and long guns. Here and there on the bare floor of polished wood were stretched handsome tiger skins.

Three piles of cushions were arranged on a low platform at one end of the room. Immediately in front of the platform stood the ever ready narghiles, or pipes, with their ivory mouthpieces and long, flexible coils, resembling cobras ready to spring.

Za, the village chief, and the wonderful magician rose

as Mr. Jenkinson entered. In true Oriental style they made profound salaams.

The room was dimly lighted by an antique lamp suspended by a silver chain, and fed by an aromatic oil which produced a pleasing odor similar to the perfume of frankincense.

When the three were seated on the divan, the old man sounded a small silver gong by his side. Servants appeared from behind the arras at certain points around the room. One brought cooled fruit, another coffee in tiny cups, a third a decanter of ice-cool water and a fourth brought cocoa-palm arrack. A fifth servant, who appeared to be a kind of steward, stationed himself in the middle of the room, watching the others arrange the refreshments on a low table not more than a foot high, which they placed immediately in front of the visitor.

At a given signal from the steward a servant appeared, carrying what seemed to the American guest to be the top part of a cone of white sugar, but which he found on closer inspection to be a white, sweet paste liberally sprinkled with peeled almonds.

The well-trained coolies moved noiselessly, with cat-like grace and ease. Having fulfilled their duties they stood motionless as statues around the walls, until at a given signal from the steward they disappeared as suddenly and as noiselessly as they had entered. The aged servant awaited a signal from his master. A slight wave of the hand by the chief indicated that he, too, was dismissed.

As soon as the refreshments had been partaken of, Mr. Peter Jenkinson broached the subject then nearest to his heart.

"Would Chudwalla, the great conjurer, be willing to

come to the United States, and bring his assistant with him? What were his terms? For how long would he consent to remain there? What would he consider good terms?"

These and many more questions Jenkinson asked. It was soon found there was no indisposition on the part of the clever magician to come to an agreement. Chudwalla, however, insisted upon one peculiar stipulation. Every fourth week he would not perform in public. He must have one week in each month, in which to do as he wished and go where he pleased. Mr. Jenkinson knew what his "drawing" power in the States would be. He therefore saw with regret that he would not be as lucrative to the syndicate, by just one-fourth, as he had anticipated. After the arrangements had been finally settled, and the arrack and coffee partaken of, Za, the chief, remarked:

"The Sahib knows not the real reason why I have urged Chudwalla to accept his proposal."

Mr. Jenkinson smiled knowingly, remarking that he had a pretty good notion.

"Ah! the Sahib mistakes. If he will but listen I will tell the real reason."

"Fire away, then, Mr. Za. These soft cushions, providing my cheroots do not give out, are just the things on which to listen to a good yarn," and he lay back luxuriously and let the blue smoke curl lazily from his lips. "Shall be glad to hear the whole shooting-match!"

"The Sahib speaks many words in a strange tongue."

"Great spooks, no! That's United States."

"Ah! the great people speak in strange ways. It is not like the English tongue which I have learned in my old age."

"By the woolly horse of Barnum, I guess not! Why, we beat the Britishers in tongue-wagging every time. Man alive! we can keep our words locked up in a box and use them when we want them without the trouble of speaking."

Za threw his palms outward as a sign of his utter inability to comprehend such marvels.

"The Sahib is amusing himself at our expense," he said.

"Don't you believe it, old gentleman; that's no fairy story. In our country we think nothing of talking to one another five hundred miles away."

"Ah! now I am sure that your worship is talking for amusement, for he means that men talk to each other by means of scrolls."

"Not a bit of it. We hear each other's voices."

"Wonderful!"

"Well, I guess 'tis kind o' wonderful, come to think of it. The fact is we have in our country the greatest kind of wizard the world ever saw. The things he does beat Chudwalla's all hollow."

"Beats mine?" said Chudwalla. "I should like to see him."

"All right. As soon as we get to New York we will go over to New Jersey and leave our cards. But what's your yarn, chief? Let's hear your story."

CHAPTER VI.**THE HINDU'S STORY**

"You saw the ruins of a temple of Brahma on the hill behind Chudwalla's tent this afternoon," began Za, as he stroked his long silver beard reflectively. "My story has much to do with that place, which was once one of the most sacred shrines in Upper India.

"I was not always as you see me now, the petty chief of this village of Chour, which, as you know, lies at the base of a spur of the Himalaya mountains, and is about forty miles from Simla.

"I was once a Rajah of considerable importance, and Purkundee, Seran, Loodheana, Sirbind, and other towns in the Seik states under British protection, held me in great respect or paid tribute to me.

"The reason of my prosperity was the possession of a talisman, which had been handed down from father to son in our tribe for generations. This talisman was a wonderfully yellow diamond. It was so peculiar and so brilliant that merchants who came from afar offered me large sums if I would but sell it.

"It was so famous a jewel that it was known throughout Hindustan by the name of 'The Eye of Brahma.' Besides its special brilliancy the diamond possessed many other remarkable qualities. People who gazed at it long became transfixed to the place, and were unable to conceal any secret which others might demand of them. It

application was said to cure the bite of most venomous snakes. In addition to all this it brought the most unlimited good-fortune to the possessor. To it was attributed the power of curing any form of sickness from which any member of the family who owned it was suffering.

"You may be sure I guarded such a treasure with the utmost caution. One day some Brahmins of the temple of Chour came to me with a proposition. Would I allow the Eye of Brahma to be kept in the temple? It would very much increase their revenues if this were permitted. I did not wish to part with the precious talisman, but they persuaded me that by placing it in the temple it would be considered as still in my possession and I could always have some one of my own household to safeguard it. I still held out. The priest then offered to give me one-third of all the offerings that were made by Hindu pilgrims. Under these conditions I consented. The Eye of Brahma was placed in the forehead of the statue of Brahma.

"The Eye of Brahma made the temple of Chour the most famous shrine in all India. Thousands upon thousands of pilgrims came yearly to this temple. I grew wealthier every year."

"Kind o' struck a bonanza, eh?" remarked the American.

"I do not know what the Sahib means, but I know that everything prospered with me, so that the English at Lahore in the Punjaub to the north of us, and at Delhi to the south, looked at me askance and thought that I was becoming too powerful a native chief.

"Whether the events I am about to relate were instigated by the English I do not know, but in the light of

subsequent events I have every reason for believing they were.

"One year a great pilgrimage was announced to the temple of Chour for the last week in June. For days before the event hundreds of people had arrived and pitched their black, goat-hair tents through all the lowlands around the temple hill.

"On the night of the pilgrimage I had taken home, as my share of the temple profits a larger bag of coins than I had ever done before. As I was going along from the hill to my house I passed a great many men who were prowling about, and who appeared to be watching me. Every tree and shrub seemed, that night, to be alive with them. They were hiding in every dark corner. I reached my house, however, unmolested, and put my money in the large chest where I kept my wealth.

"There were strange and ominous signs of some coming trouble. I became anxious for the safety of my talisman, although I remembered that Chudwalla—our friend here, then a member of my household—was guarding it night and day in the temple.

"As soon as possible I returned to the temple. I had scarcely entered the private door of the priests when I heard the alarming sounds of an attack on the big doors. Heavy beams were used to break them down. Huge rocks were hurled. At length they gave way. Hundreds of swarthy Hindus rushed into the edifice. The keepers of the temple tried hard to prevent the pillage. I was attacked and left senseless on the floor. Chudwalla was thought to be dead from the injuries he received.

"When I recovered consciousness my diamond was gone. Weak and bleeding I crawled down the hill to my

house. It was in flames. My treasure chest had been rifled. The savings of years had been stolen. My servants had fled in terror.

"Weak as I was from the injuries I had received, I collected my tribesmen. Before daylight we set off in haste toward Patialah with the intentions of overtaking the marauders if possible, and of compelling restitution of the jewel."

"A regular Donnybrook, eh?" again interrupted Mr. Jenkinson.

"I understand not the term, Sahib, but we captured the chief of the Patialah tribe and held him prisoner. Then the British authorities interfered and we were all compelled to travel down the Dooah canal, a distance of nearly two hundred miles, to Delhi, to have the case tried according to the slow fashion of English law. The judge ordered the return of my wonderful diamond. I was overjoyed.

"When the officers began to put the sentence into execution, alas! my talisman was nowhere to be found. It had as completely disappeared as if it had never existed. A year later some of my tribe traced it to London, but after that we lost all trace of it completely.

"And you expect Chudwalla to find that bit of charcoal for you in the United States!" exclaimed Jenkinson, now thoroughly interested. "Don't forget that the United States is a terrible big place."

"Wait, Sahib, and you shall hear my reasons for so hoping. I consulted a member of the Holy Brotherhood, the monk Attra, who is an adept of our esoteric Brahminism. He has prophesied that unless I send some one in search of my talisman, who has seen the Eye of Brahma, and was present when the temple was pillaged, I shall never recover

it, or my fortunes. It has been my fate to long and wait for years, for this person. To-day I have found the favored one in the great magician, for I have discovered that he is the Chudwalla that formerly guarded my precious treasure."

"Well, I do declare!" said the agent, "if you Hindus don't beat just everything. Do you mean to say, stranger, that you place reliance on such a story? Well, well! If I ever! Dear me! Well, well! Strikes me, partner, that a New York newsboy would have a fine sight better chance to get that back for you than our friend, the conjurer, here. By the way, what makes you think the jewel is in my country?"

"The American Sahib must know," replied the old chieftain, "that the great pundit, Attra, has often projected his astral form into the land of the fresh-water seas, and has more than once seen the Eye of Brahma in that land where no thirst can come."

Mr. Peter Jenkinson turned and looked sharply into the face of the chief, who, he imagined, was quizzing him. Seeing only the most perfect credulity there, amusement began to take the place of suspicion, although he recognized there was indeed something pathetic in the old man's sorrow for his losses.

"Unfortunately," continued Za, "Attra has been unable to exactly locate the diamond. When his astral form—his other self—reunites itself with his own body, in some strange manner, his memory loses all consciousness of the place where he has seen the Eye."

"Look here, old man," said the practical Yankee, "all this is undoubtedly a 'fake.' You tell Mr. Attra so, with my compliments, when you see him again." And the buyer

of elephants leaned back on the soft cushions, with his hands behind his head, and the right foot resting on the left knee, the picture of luxurious rest and self-confidence.

"I am sure the guest of Za does not wish to insult his host," said the chief, with a dignity which surprised and checked the agent.

"Pardon me, partner; no offense, you know."

"If the Sahib is not convinced that I speak truly," continued the chief, with an impressive native dignity, "I shall be pleased to show him a few wonders. I, myself, have reached to no small attainment in Brahminical mysteries, although I cannot control the powers of nature in any such degree as the wonderful Attra."

"All right, old man; go ahead. I shall be delighted to see some more monkey tricks, but I don't expect they will beat Chudwalla's anyway."

Za clapped his hands. The old coolie appeared from behind the arras where he had heard all that had passed. He knew what his master wanted. He placed a brass tripod of exquisite workmanship in the center of the room, about fifteen feet away from the low refreshment table at the foot of the divan. The tripod was an excellent specimen of Indian handicraft, representing three wonderfully wrought and lifelike-looking snakes, whose heads were on the ground, and whose undulating bodies were so arranged that the three tails supported a curiously wrought brass dish. Below the dish was a shelf on which was a lighted spirit-lamp, which had already well-heated the dish above it.

At a signal from Za, the servant placed some pieces of sandalwood on the dish, and over them scattered a white powder. He then retired as noiselessly as he had entered.

Very soon a faint, white smoke rose from the dish. It resembled the meadow reek on a warm summer night. A delicious, soft, languorous odor began to be perceived by the American searcher for curiosities. He enjoyed the delicate perfume. He imagined himself reclining on rose-colored clouds, seeing in the mist before him the most beautiful of landscapes, embroidered by the fairest of earth's flowers. To his imagination, singing-birds filled the air with melody, and he pictured to himself, in the thin vapor, that most delightful of all things in a hot country—a cascade of cool, limpid water.

Jenkinson propped his head with a pillow and looked fixedly at the tripod. Those spiral folds of the brass snakes were certainly moving and writhing!

The brazier now sent up a white column of perfumed smoke, completely hiding the light of the single lamp above. It filled the distant part of the room and hid the silken arras.

Za, sitting on the left of the American, began to grow rigid. Stretching out his long thin arm, with stiffened forefinger, he pointed to the white cloud.

"Look!"

"Who is it?" asked the agent in an awed whisper.

"Attra of the Holy Brotherhood!"

What did Jenkinson see, or at least, what did he ever after declare he saw?

In the center of the white vapor, now massed in the far part of the room, he discovered the faint, indistinct outlines of a human figure. Gradually it grew more distinct, and he saw the tall form of a Brahmin mendicant priest clad in a long, yellow robe, cinctured about the waist, from which was suspended a string of prayer stones.

He held in his hand an empty wooden rice bowl. His eyebrows were shaven and the finger nails were dyed black. His eyes had the deep, cavernous look of a Brahminical mystic.

The figure appeared about three feet above the ground. The agent was much interested, and, perhaps, not a little startled. He was about to ask Chudwalla whether he could not reproduce this illusion when he came to America, when Za made a peremptory gesture for silence by putting his finger to his lips.

"Look again, Sahib."

Once more Jenkinson turned his eyes in the direction of the white vapor. Looking intently at the still visible figure of Attra, he discovered at his side the faint outlines of another person. In a short time the filmy figure had assumed definite shape. Jenkinson was intensely surprised, for in the mist he saw himself. His own face and features; his soft felt hat, well back on his head, standing collar, cutaway coat, and even his high pants and low shoes. He saw a perfect picture of himself. The vision even went into details, and he perceived himself in his usual attitude, his hands in his pants' pockets, with the ever-ready cheroot in his mouth.

The agent sat with wide-open mouth, staring intently at the vision of himself. For once in his life he had seen something which his practical, business mind could not account for—which he could not price or estimate.

"Well, I do declare! Well, I do declare!" he repeated time and again.

Chudwalla and Za smiled with satisfaction. They had, at least, shown their visitor something the secret of which he did not pretend to fathom.

The apparition, which had lasted for the space of about ninety seconds, now began to fade. Smoke had ceased to ascend from the metal dish. In two minutes the room was clear of the heavily perfumed vapor.

"The American Sahib will give us credit for being able to accomplish some wonders," said the now pleased old man.

"You may stake your last dollar on that," remarked Jenkinson, as he rose to go. "Well, then, Chudwalla, I meet you at the P. & O. steamers' docks in Bombay on the tenth of next month."

Chudwalla bowed assent.

"I have one word to add to my story," said Za, as he led his guest to the veranda of his bungalow. "Should the present holder of the precious Eye of Brahma, when discovered, be found to be an honest man and willing to return to me what is my own and which the English court at Delhi has declared to be my own, I will, for his honesty, give him or his son, five hundred acres of the richest land here around Chour."

"I tell you what it is, my friend," replied the agent: "it is my belief that you will never have the occasion to part with your land, although it is Peter Jenkinson who wishes you luck in your search. Put it there—old man."

As he again shook hands with the old chieftain, he asked one more question.

"Say, squire, just tell me now, won't you, how those figures appeared in or on that smoke? I am sure it beats any other trick I have ever seen in any part of the world."

The Hindu stroked his long silvery beard and smiled, but remained silent. And so Mr. Jenkinson never learned the mystery. Whether he had seen the astral form of

which there is so much talk, or a vision, or whether his own brain had been over-excited so that he imagined he had seen things that had no reality, he is unable to determine to this day.

As he walked to his lodging-place, he began to think over the events of the evening.

"Five hundred acres, eh! poor old man! What strange fancies and delusions there are in the world! Guess he'll keep his land for many a year to come. Great Scott, five hundred! Why, the railroad will be running from Lahore and Simla to Delhi in a year or two right through this valley. There would be money in land then. I do declare, when I get back to the United States if I am not going to have a hunt for that stone myself. It's queer if Peter Jenkinson don't get some trace of it."

CHAPTER VII.

MR. HILLSON LEAVES.

ONE of the pleasures of our young friends on returning to college as members of the graduating class, was to find a cosy class-room ready for them. Mr. Hillson had thought long about doing something for the boys whom he was about to leave. He wished to make a special parting gift, by which they would remember him.

He was at a loss what to do. He had thought of adding something to the gymnasium, but both it and the game-rooms were abundantly stocked with everything necessary and useful for all indoor exercise or amusement. Then he thought of purchasing some sets of favorite authors for

the boys' library, but he relinquished that idea. None that were really valuable were wanting. Finally he hit upon the plan of furnishing the class-room of the Philosophers in as comfortable a manner as was consistent with the good hard study which was expected from the graduating class. He procured a fine ornamental swing-lamp, some lace curtains, three or four steel engravings of pictures by great masters. The old and whittled desks were removed and each Philosopher was provided with a private desk and a very comfortable chair. The desk and platform of the professor were taken away, and a long green-covered table substituted; at the head of which a very comfortable arm-chair was provided for the professors who were to introduce these boys to the mysteries of logic, ontology, psychology, natural theology, and Catholic ethics.

Perhaps my readers will be inclined to say that the boys deserved such a room if they had to study such hard subjects as those just named. Well, let them wait until they arrive at the last stage in their college career and they will find this formidable array of subjects to be not quite so formidable as they appear on paper. Our young friends did not find them so difficult after they had once become used to the terms, and had learned how to "use their tools" as it were. But of this we shall speak later.

On the day following their arrival, accompanied by Mr. Shalford, the members of the Philosophy class were taken by Mr. Hillson to their class-room.

As he unlocked the door and told the boys to enter, he was amply repaid for all the trouble he had taken by witnessing their surprise and delight.

"This is glorious," said Stapleton. "Who did it all?"

"Splendid!" "Fine!" "Grand!" "Great!" was the chorus of admiration from the delighted boys.

"Who did it all?" again asked Frank Stapleton.

Mr. Hillson was silent.

"I'll tell you who did it," said Mr. Shalford; "there's the culprit"—pointing to the retiring prefect, who, the boys afterward declared, actually blushed. "He is the kind, thoughtful man who can never do enough for you boys. I do not believe there is a Philosophy class-room in any college in the country equal to this."

"I don't believe there is, sir," said Hunter.

"And you must show your appreciation of Mr. Hillson's kindness, not only by taking care of these fine desks and chairs here, but also while you have things very comfortable, not to waste your time in idleness. Believe me, boys, your semi-annual examinations come terribly soon. I know they did for me when I was a boy," he added, laughingly.

"You will not be much overlooked this year," he continued; "you will be left considerably alone. You will do your studying here, so you are free from all study-hall routine. I need hardly say that Mr. Hillson has procured you that privilege, and it is my opinion that he is over-kind, over-indulgent, and of course, is spoiling all of you—yes, spoiling all of you."

The laughing twinkle in his eyes belied his words.

"No, no, no, no," came the chorus in earnest protest. They scarcely knew whether Mr. Shalford meant what he said.

"Well, I have my doubts. Yes, I have my doubts, but time will tell. But, seriously, boys, your position is a responsible one in the college. You are the highest class.

All the boys look up to you. The moral tone of St. Cuthbert's depends largely on you ten boys.

"At Mr. Hillson's earnest solicitation I put no obstacle in the way of his plans for your comfort. You have now to show your appreciation by acting honorably and in a manly way throughout the whole year. I am sure it would wound Mr. Hillson very much if he were to learn that you had lost, by any bad conduct on your part, a privilege he had great difficulty in obtaining for you, and I must candidly confess—although I do not believe those wings will sprout this year—I must confess, that I do not anticipate any trouble from you."

"Don't you fear for us, Mr. Shalford," said Claude Winters. "I'll keep these fellows straight—you'll see." At which remark all the rest burst out laughing.

"And we, sir, will constitute ourselves a committee of the whole to look after the little man in long pants," remarked Selby.

"Oh! I'll pay you for that when I get you alone," said Claude.

"Well, good-by, boys," said Mr. Shalford. "I'll leave you for a last talk with Mr. Hillson. Oh, I forgot one thing, which I may as well state now and then everything will be understood between us. This room is open to you at all times, but it is not free to any boy, big or small, who does not belong to the Philosophy class, nor can any one come here without having first obtained my permission. Please, let this be well understood. Is it all clear, boys? Everything clear?"

They all answered that they understood the regulations fully.

"Well, then, I leave you now. I'm very busy. I leave

Mr. Hillson to your tender mercies, ha, ha!" and he was gone.

It was a pleasant time, that next half hour. It was never eradicated from the memory of several of the boys present. At first there was a little restraint on the part of the boys. All wanted to say something suitable, and no one seemed able to think of the right thing. The one thought predominated. They were about to lose their true and tried friend.

Mr. Hillson, in his tactful way, came to the rescue. He became reminiscent, going over all the years he had spent at St. Cuthbert's. He remembered these strong, big, full-grown boys when they first came, little, timid fellows in the small division. He recalled this famous hand-ball game, that celebrated baseball victory, or that long day's rabbit-hunting.

He remembered them on the day when this almost identical group, four years ago, came over to the large yard. He recalled the various events of interest, year by year, until they were surprised by the accuracy of a memory, which could bring up details of events long since forgotten by themselves. Finally, in his chatty way, he went over the principal events of the previous year. He touched upon the mad freak of the boys at the haunted mill, and of Hunter's subsequent illness. He brought back to their memory how Hunter had suffered mental tortures afterward through the slanders of Finch and Buckley, of the part the now changed, but then misguided Jones had played in that miserable affair, and how everything was eventually righted.

He enquired whether those lines were ever recited for the attempted trial of the Testy Tailor for the murder of

the living witness, who testified that he was murdered. The catching of the thief and his expulsion—the visit to Rosecroft manor—and the baptizing of the dying man on the hillside last year, were all recalled with much more fullness of detail than recorded in a former volume, and from each event he drew some good lesson, which tended to form character, admonish, or give encouragement.

But Mr. Hillson was at his best when giving these boys he loved so much some good advice for the future—advice which, if followed, would enable them to avoid the snares and pitfalls of a great college, where all sorts of characters and dispositions must necessarily meet and have their influence for good or ill on one another.

It would be impossible to reproduce his words. Pen and ink will not convey the glance of the eye, or record the earnest, loving tones of the spoken words. Cold type would be but a poor medium by which to convey to the reader a notion of the respect and love in which these boys held their former teacher and prefect.

He spoke earnestly and in a heartfelt way to hearts that were full also; full of deep feeling and of good resolve and noble purpose. All he said fell apparently on good soil, which he himself had taken years to prepare.

After having spoken seriously for some time, he assumed a lighter vein. He did not want the strain to be too great.

“And now, boys, I want to say a word about your study of philosophy. Work hard. Be united, and when the time comes for having circles (not wheels, Claude,) try earnestly to put each other in the sack!”

All this was, as yet, worse than Greek to the boys. He continued :

"Master well your terms. They are your instruments of mental warfare. Always argue in syllogistic form. How is this for a syllogism, Claude? 'Either it rains, or it does not rain. But it does not rain; therefore, it rains'?" and Mr. Hillson laughed aloud at the boy's perplexity. As yet it was too much for him. None of them, at that stage, could detect the evident sophism.

"Never mind, Claude. Wonderful wisdom will come to you by and by. Don't be in a hurry. And now, boys, as I have only half an hour left before the train starts, and as I have to say good-by to several members of the faculty, I must leave you with one word: Consider well, this year, what your calling in life is to be. Choose well, but pray much before you choose. Some people say Catholic colleges are instituted for the purpose of securing young men for the priesthood. This is not true. A Catholic college will foster a vocation if a boy has one, but it cannot give it. A vocation to the sacred ministry is a gift of God. If any of you feel that you have a vocation to the sacred ministry, in the name of God, do not neglect it, but guard it as you would the most precious jewel you could possess. Among the thousands of priests who are engaged in parochial work there is scarcely one who does not do two men's work, and often more. It is as true to-day as ever that the harvest is great, but the laborers are few. And, boys, do not sneer and think the less of those rural priests because their worn coat may be shiny at the collar, or the knees of their pants are over-smooth. They are the heroes and noblemen of the Church in this country, who, being refined, educated, polished, give up every convenience of life for souls. Oh, I could—"

But he stopped short and hastily looked at his watch.

"Really, my dear boys, I could say a great deal about these grand characters, but I have not time. Now, may God bless you. May Almighty God bless you. I, I will pray for you always. Good-by, good-by!"

The young fellows crowded around him with choking hearts. Long were the hand-clasps, mostly in silence. Full hearts would not trust trembling lips to speak. "Good-by, good-by, sir," was about all any one trusted himself to utter. The pity of it, that when our hearts are fullest our words are weakest. Brief indeed were the words they used, but they were eloquent of mutual love and esteem, mutual well-wishings, and mutual regrets at parting. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, but there are times, also, when the heart is so abundantly filled with solemn emotion that words are useless and almost a sacrilege.

More than one big tear rolled down from Mr. Hillson's eyes. At last the hand-shaking was done. Once more the loved prefect said, "Good-by, boys," but no one would trust himself to speak. So in silence Mr. Hillson left the room.

Big Frank Stapleton went to the window, and by some unaccountably sudden cold in the head, was busy blowing his nose. Several of the others tried hard to look unconcernedly out of the windows—and failed miserably, while others sat in more or less disconsolate attitudes at their desks or on the table.

"Say, boys, there's the carriage! The idea of us staying here, and not seeing him off!"

"Why, of course! What are we thinking about?" said Stapleton. The tension of the emotion was thus broken. The boys, a moment before so affected by the parting from

their friend, were now all animation. Rushing downstairs to the yard, they soon collected all the boys at the front entrance to the college.

After a few minutes the front door was opened and the venerable President appeared, warmly shaking Mr. Hillson's hand. They both stepped outside and then the late prefect saw the whole college gathered in front of the steps. For a moment he appeared about to withdraw from the impending ovation.

The President saw the motion and laughingly pushed him forward. This action the boys took as a sanction for all they should do. Cheer upon cheer rent the air. Hats and caps were tossed and the enthusiasm seemed to know no bounds. Mr. Hillson was reaping the rewards of faithful service, and of thousands of kindly actions. The older boys noticed with satisfaction that none cheered more loudly nor longer nor lustier than their new prefect, Mr. Shalford.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MOTHER'S MEMORY.

"LOOK at George McLeod, fellows; doesn't he seem to be badly in the dumps?" said Rob Jones to a group of boys near the grand stand on the baseball field.

"He certainly does look as if something were the matter with him," remarked Ambrose Bracebridge.

"Haven't you heard about the fuss he got into on 'first day'?" asked Fred Nash, who was near by, waiting to take his turn at the bat in a scratch game of ball.

"No; what's the matter?" asked several.

"I can't tell you now—there! that fellow is out. I'll tell you what I know when I fan out," and the speaker went toward the home-plate.

The little group, including Howard Hunter and Claude Winters, watched McLeod as he slowly walked alone along the mile track which skirted the diamond. The boy looked sad and disheartened. His cap was down over his eyes, his hands in his pockets. He appeared to be in some great trouble.

"It's a pity to see that jolly fellow in trouble," said Rob Jones. "I wonder what it can be. He is, if I mistake not, a socialist, and even a minor officer, censor or something of that sort. I wonder what is the matter with him."

"I'm surprised you fellows haven't heard about the scrape he got into," said Nash, who had promptly fanned out according to his own predictions, "but as you live so much in your furnished apartments—you Philosophers—of course you don't hear half that is going on in the yards."

"Humph! I'd like to know who stays more in 'Hillson's parlor' than you do, Nash," said Winters. "But anyway, tell us all about McLeod, there's a good fellow."

"It is pretty serious, I believe," said Nash. "He came here this year a day ahead of time."

"That wouldn't make him so blue," interrupted Winters.

"Just wait, can't you, for what I have to say. He came ahead of time, as I say, and was allowed to go where he liked until the crowd came. Well, in the morning of your arrival he went into town and came back acting very strangely. Father Lovelace saw him and demanded an explanation, which he refused to give—there was some trouble. That's all I know."

"Pshaw! You are a great story-teller! That doesn't explain much," said Winters.

"Well, if you want further information, you had better go and ask Mr. Silverton, the division prefect. I've told you all I know."

Winters did not seek the division prefect, nevertheless Mr. Silverton was puzzled. Rarely had he met a boy that he could not manage. There was a harshness and an unmanageableness about McLeod he could not understand. The lad's character was an enigma to him, and it was not for two or three weeks after the above conversation had occurred that he discovered the key. George was a bright intelligent, and generally well-behaved boy. He was always well and neatly dressed. He had a fine clear skin and well-cut features. Owing to somewhat weak sight, he wore eye-glasses. He was thirteen years old and he had been at St. Cuthbert's one year.

Notwithstanding his really prepossessing appearance there was evidence of a hardness, amounting almost to cynicism in the boy's character, which caused no little anxiety at home and at college.

His father was wealthy, to a large extent over-indulgent, and had allowed George to have his own way. He had permitted him to attend a public school in a fashionable locality for two years. Perceiving, at length, that his character was not being developed in the right direction, Mr. McLeod had sent him to St. Cuthbert's, where, although a big boy for his age, he was placed under the care of Mr. Silverton in the junior division.

Upon his arrival the newcomer was placed in the Third Academic class, where he was to begin the study of Latin. It was soon evident that the new scholar was hard to man-

age. After the novelty of being at a new school and among a set of boys who were strangers to him had worn off, George McLeod began to give trouble. Very often the teacher sent him from the class-room to the prefect of studies for punishment for some grave misdemeanor. Time and time again it was found that the youngster, instead of going to the office of that dread functionary, had quietly slipped out of the yard and spent the hour on his back watching the clouds, under the trees in the blue grass.

Mr. Silvertown was not a believer in the doctrine of total depravity. He had the happy faculty of finding out and cultivating the best side of a boy's character. He studied each boy. Precisely because of the dangerous tendencies already more or less developed in this case, he made an especial study of George McLeod.

"I do not like the boy's hardness of face, nor that frequent cynical shrug of the shoulder, especially in one so young," the prefect said to his assistant; "but there is one hope left. The boy, this year, has joined the First Communion class. It is quite late for him, but you know he has been to a public school for some time. I suppose his father was careless about the matter. I hope his First Communion will solve the difficulty."

"I am told, George, that you have joined the First Communion class," he said, as the boy came up.

"Yes, sir."

"That's good. Now we may hope for an improvement, eh?"

The boy was silent. He would make no promise. Several weeks passed from the time of Nash's remarks on the ball-field and there appeared little difference in George's

conduct. As the time for the great event approached, Mr. Silvertown spoke earnestly to the boy. He ended by saying:

"Now listen, George. You must know that it is simply impossible for you to go on in this way and to think you will be allowed to make your First Communion."

The warning had a good effect. For several days his professor and Mr. Silvertown saw, or at least they thought they saw, an improvement. Giving the boy every benefit of every doubt, as well as relying on the effects which the First Communion would produce, the President decided to allow McLeod to make it with the rest of the class.

A holiday was granted to the First Communion class on the Monday following, the boys being permitted to attend an early Mass, in order to spend a long day in the woods.

On the Tuesday morning, the day after the holiday, during the students' Mass, Mr. Silvertown was very much surprised to see George McLeod and his friend Bruce Goodwin engage in an animated whispered conversation during the whole time of Mass, interspersed not infrequently with snickering and suppressed giggling.

Not wishing to publicly humiliate a boy so soon after his First Communion by making him stand out in the aisle for the rest of the Mass, the prefect caught George's eye, and by a glance conveyed the unspoken reproof. The effect was instantaneous, but transitory. The whispering was resumed almost immediately.

"Wait for me outside," said Mr. Silvertown, as the two delinquents were leaving the chapel. The boys remained in the yard. Bruce Goodwin touched his hat and looked ashamed and sheepish as the prefect came up to him.

George McLeod stood with his hands behind his back, with that detestable half-leer on his face, so incongruous in one so young.

"I am very sorry, George, to see such conduct at Mass, so soon after the great event of last Sunday, too. What does it all mean?"

"What's the matter, sir?"

"Matter! You know well enough to what I refer—your conduct at Mass this morning. Is this the way a First Communicant should act?"

"You didn't say anything—"

"No, because I did not want to disgrace you. I wanted to save you the shame of being publicly punished in chapel so soon after the great event of your life. As it is, those who saw you are much shocked."

The curl on the boy's lips became harder. There was a nasty gray look in his eyes. Mr. Silverton sighed as he saw his words had little effect.

"Last Sunday," he continued, "should have been, and was, a turning-point in your life. Before that time you were considered to be more or less only a little animal, moved by instinct rather than reason. When one has made his First Communion he must begin to think—to allow his reason to control his actions. He is no longer irresponsible. If you were ignorant this morning at Mass there might have been some excuse, but you are sufficiently instructed to know that during the Holy Sacrifice, Jesus Christ is present on the altar. You know this, do you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then, you deserve punishment for your irreverence; so, after breakfast, both of you will bring your Latin

grammars. George, you will stand at that post there, and, Bruce, you take the second one."

The prefect told them to learn a table of declensions and decline a number of adjectives, having found out they were behind their class in the perfect knowledge of these.

During the day Mr. Silvertown noticed that McLeod had not attempted to learn his penance, but for the most part of the time had stood literally "at his post" with his book defiantly closed and under his arm. Bruce Goodwin had made, at least, an attempt to learn something. After class, in the morning, George followed his usual tactics. Of course, he spent the usual half-holiday of Tuesday in the yard. Wednesday passed in the same manner. Thursday half-holiday approached, yet the boy had made no progress.

The prefect began to fear it was a case of obstinate refusal, which would probably cut short his college career. Having determined to take plenty of time before acting, he waited until Friday. During the recess on that day, which was a wet day, George was stationed in the corridor, having for company his unwelcome Latin grammar.

Much to his regret, the prefect noticed all the time on the face of McLeod that cold, hard, obstinate sneer, which gave such little hope of a change of sentiment. In the evening before study time, Mr. Silvertown spoke to the boy.

"Well, George, do you know any of your penance?"

"No."

"What's that?"

"No—sir."

"Do you mean to learn it?"

George merely raised his chin and shrugged his shoulders.

"What does that mean? You do not think I am trying to be revenged on you?"

"No, sir," came the answer, quickly.

"You know what your penance was given for?"

"For cutting up during Mass."

"Cutting up, as you call it—yes, that was it. Do you not think the penance was well deserved?"

"I don't know that I did much—" and the young and withal handsome face, looked more defiant than ever.

"Oh, George, George! this from a well-instructed boy who has just made his First Communion! You don't know that you did much! And yet you behaved in that manner before the Blessed Sacrament!"

He paused. McLeod merely gave another shrug of his shoulders.

"But think, my lad, think of the kind of conduct you are guilty of. And then, what would you think of yourself if your mother were to see all this?"

Suddenly there came a change which fairly electrified the prefect—a scene such as but few men engaged in educational pursuits see once in their lives.

Without a moment's warning the little fellow burst into a loud passion of sobs and tears. Tears flowed in streams down his cheeks. He hid his face in his hands, giving way to a perfect abandon of grief.

"Oh, oh, for her sake, don't mention her! Perhaps you don't know, but she is dead—dead—and I can't bear any one to mention her name—don't—don't—don't!"

Mr. Silverton was unwontedly affected. Had the circumstances been different he probably would have mingled his tears of sympathy with those of the weeping boy, for the more or less uncongenial work of the disciplinarian

had not dried up within him the well-spring of a warm heart. He saw, with joy, that he had struck the right note by which he could reach the boy and touch his better nature. He saw, also, that now he had an instrument in his hands with which he could break through the crust of coldness and apparent cynicism, which, after all, could be only very superficial in one so young.

"Oh, don't mention her, sir; I can't stand it!" continued McLeod, between his now really pitiful sobs.

"Come, come, my boy; this is only sentiment after all. I am aware that your mother is dead, and, as we both believe, now in heaven. Why should that prevent us speaking of her?"

"No, no, no, no, don't! I can't bear it!"

"But still I insist. Your grief shows how much you love her. Well, then, show your love for her by doing what is right and what you know would please her were she here—show her that you love her still by doing your duty now."

There was a sudden pause in the sobbing while the boy looked straight into the prefect's face.

"I never looked at it in that way!"

"That's the best way to look at it, my child. Love consists more in actions than in words."

Eagerly the boy snatched the book from the window-sill, and, even while drying his eyes with his coat-sleeve, began in earnest to learn the lesson.

Mr. Silvertown stood watching the now transformed boy, who sobbed at intervals—the last soughs of the storm that was passed—from the excess of his recent strong emotion.

And that face! All the hard lines were gone out of it.

Once more it looked natural in its young, innocent beauty. The enthusiastic trainer of youth thanked the Sacred Heart for the victory, for he knew the hard lines in the face, the sneer, the incipient "toughness" of character had gone forever—melted out of the little fellow's nature by the alchemy of love's tears.

Mr. Silverton was on the point of forgiving the boy his penance, but his experience told him that would be folly. With a few kind words he left George McLeod in the corridor, now hard and earnestly studying his task. Coming back within an hour the prefect asked:

"Well, George, do you know any of the lesson yet?" Without answering, the boy simply offered him the book, beginning at once to repeat. Three or four nouns were well learned. It was evident there had been an honest effort to do something.

"Very good; that's a good start. At this rate you will soon be able to decline the last adjective on your list. To-night you must try to learn as much of your penance as you can. We will get it off our hands as soon as may be."

On Saturday morning the back of the penance was broken. What was better, George McLeod was himself again. All his naturally open, ingenuous nature was budding out afresh.

Poor boy! Deprived of a mother's gentle care when he needed it most, for three years he had kept her sacred memory green in his heart. 'This, in spite of untoward circumstances, had safeguarded him. Although he had acquired a certain exterior un-Catholic demeanor, yet the memory of her love and her training had had their effect. Beneath all it had kept the young heart fresh. What

may not a mother's love accomplish? How foolish the boy who neglects it!

After class on Saturday afternoon, the boy came to the prefect. He respectfully touched his cap, saying:

"Mr. Silverton, I have a great favor to ask."

"Well, George, what can I do for you?"

"The President, who had our First Communion class, told us that we should go to Holy Communion on the Sunday after our First Communion, for our parents. He asked us to remember him, as well."

"Yes?"

"Now, sir, if I go to Holy Communion to-morrow, I shall have to go to confession now. Would you, therefore, excuse me my penance for to-night? I think I shall finish it by Monday."

"Certainly, I'll do that. So you are going to Holy Communion again to-morrow? Then let me recommend to you a very special intention. Fervently ask our divine Lord, when you receive Him, to give you the grace to behave always with proper reverence at Mass and Benediction, and, in fact, every time you enter a church where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. Ask it not only for the present, but that it may remain with you for your whole life. Did you ever observe, George, how very few men are really reverential toward the Blessed Sacrament—and yet their case is not like yours, arising from boyish thoughtlessness, but from a kind of criminal negligence. And, of course, I would not object if you were to remember me also in your Holy Communion to-morrow."

"Why, sure, sir; I'll remember you and pray ever so hard for you, too."

The penance was finished on the Monday. The boy was

a changed boy. There now existed a perfect understanding between him and Mr. Silverton. Many and beautiful were the talks these two afterward had about the dear departed mother. Many were the lasting lessons young George McLeod learned from the enthusiastic prefect, who in turn learned not a few things while studying the child.

"How came you to mention her, sir?" asked McLeod about a month after Nash had seen him so despondent on the ball-field.

"I really do not know, my boy," was the answer. "Her" always meant George's mother to these two.

"No one, not even my father, ever speaks of her to me, but I have thought of her night and day. You were the only one who ever mentioned her. When you did, I felt you had conquered me, and that night when I went to bed I loved you and felt that I would do anything for you. How was it you came to mention her, sir?"

"As I say, I really do not know. I had thought of nearly everything likely to touch you and get you out of that ugly humor. It must have been the grace which you had merited by your First Communion that caused me to say the right thing just at the right time."

"I'll tell you what I think it was," said the boy with that candor and confidence which are found nowhere in such perfection between pupils and teachers as in Catholic colleges. "I don't believe it was I, nor do I believe it was you, but I believe it was mamma praying for me in heaven. I have never forgotten her and I am sure she has never forgotten me."

"Doubtless you are quite correct."

CHAPTER IX.

HOW GRAY TOOK CARE OF HIMSELF.

ABOUT two weeks after the term had started, and when everything was quietly dropping into the regular routine of study, of class, and of play; when the professors had become fairly acquainted with the newcomers in each class, and when the prefect had almost sufficient time to learn the tendencies and idiosyncrasies of the boys when in the yards, or field, or on the track there came to the college a new boy.

Now, there is nothing remarkable nor, perhaps, worth recording in the fact that a boy came two weeks late, especially as it was the custom at St. Cuthbert's to receive boys at any time during the first term. But this particular boy had some peculiar characteristics which for some time after his advent, made him a somewhat conspicuous personage. He came on the last day of September, and was immediately ushered into the President's office. That functionary gave him a grave but kindly welcome to St. Cuthbert's. The boy was evidently displeased with his new surroundings.

"What is your name?" asked the Father.

"Dear me, don't you know my name, Father? Why, Father Holloway, in our village, wrote to you to say I was coming."

"Indeed!" said the Rector, amused; "and how am I to know whether you are the boy of whom he wrote unless you tell me who you are?"

"My name is Gray—John Philip Watkins Gray. The Watkins are great people where I come from—own most of the land thereabouts, and father's a justice of the peace, too."

"Indeed!" said the priest, still very much amused, but not at all impressed by the personage before him, nor by his gratuitous information, "and may I ask how far John Philip Watson Gray is advanced in his studies?"

"Watkins, Father, not Watson, if you please. Everybody knows the Watkinses and the Grays where I come from."

"Very likely, my boy, most likely. But what do you know? How far advanced are you in studies?"

"Head of the school, Father, there. First in sums, and in g'ography, and there ain't a boy in the place that can down me at a spellin' bee."

"Humph! I notice you haven't given much attention to grammar."

"Oh, lots. I know all the parts of speech and can parse every word in the Fifth Reader. I'm wide-awake, I am, Father, and there are very few who can get ahead of me, sure's you're livin'."

The President gave the boy a searching glance. He took Father Holloway's letter from a pigeon-hole in his desk, and deliberately read it, making some audible comments as he did so.

"Yes, doubtless,—a good boy—a little heady—not a doubt about that—will buy his experience—certainly, and perhaps dearly—untutored, crude, inexperienced—quite right, quite right."

Then he read in silence for some time, paying not the slightest attention to the boy. It was Gray's first lesson.

He stood there awkward and blushing, feeling exceedingly small. Perhaps for the first time since he had entered his teens he did not know what to do with his hands. Made much of at home, the best, or at least the biggest boy in the village school, he had imagined he was the central sun of his own little universe. At home, he was so. Now, for the first time, he was away from home, and in the presence of the head of the college, he did not feel half so important a person as he did when he left his father's house, his sisters waving their sun-bonnets, and his father's hired hands their caps as he rode off in triumph. His brief hour of triumph and importance was over. He would not care for his sisters to see him just now standing first on one leg and then on another, twirling his hat in as approved a fashion as the smallest boy in the small boy's yard could have done.

The kindly old President regarded him with an amused twinkle in his eye. How many of just such boys had he seen in his long career! He could have told that boy what his experience would be at St. Cuthbert's for the next six months with unerring accuracy. He merely said:

"Father Holloway's letter about you is, in the main, quite satisfactory."

Gray's self-esteem began to return. The only man whom he really feared—although he respected him, too—was his parish priest. He began to hold up his head again.

"Can I go, then, Father?"

"Yes, I hope you will be happy here. Study hard. Remember, your father goes to a considerable expense to send you here."

"Oh, my father's well off. He has seven hundred acres of land, and the Watkinses—"

"That's not the question, boy," said the President, sternly. "Your father has not money to throw away on a worthless son who idles away his time."

Changing his tone he added :

"But it is not fair to suppose you will do this. Be a good boy and you will get along. Come and see me whenever you like."

The boy turned to go.

"Wait one minute, Gray. This is the first time you have ever been among a large crowd of boys. You will probably find some who are fond of practical jokes. Beware of them. Be on your guard. Sometimes these jokes lead to unpleasant consequences."

"Don't fear for me, Father," answered the boy. "I would like to see any fellow who could catch me. I'm wide-awake, I am. I know a thing or two."

The President merely smiled. With a wave of the hand he dismissed him. The first person Gray met in the yard was Mr. Shalford.

"New boy, eh? Glad to see you. Hope you'll soon feel at home. What class? Third Commercial, eh? Very good. If you want to get along you have to work hard and keep the rules. If you don't do the first—why, home you go, and if you don't do the second—well, there's trouble, see?"

"I guess I know all about that, sir."

"Glad you do; glad you do."

"The head of this institution told me just about the same thing. Guess you people are mighty strong on these points."

"Pretty strong, I assure you."

By this time Mr. Shalford had seen through the boy

fairly well. He, too, most probably saw what was in store for him.

"By the way, what's your name?"

"John Philip Watkins Gray."

"Phew! Say, you had better drop half that here. I advise you to do so. It's too big to carry around here. Better call yourself Gray, or John Gray. You must excuse me. I could never think of all those names. Life's too short."

"But the Watkinses are big people at home. They own nearly all the land in—"

"Of course, of course. But, my dear boy, don't you see, the boys here won't care one red herring about that, and they'll make no end of jokes on you, see? Look here, Gray, better look out for tricks. Some of the boys might consider you a good subject for experimentation."

"That's just what the boss said."

"Who?"

"I mean the head man here. What do you call him—the President. That's just what he said, but I guess I can take care of myself well enough."

"Glad to hear you say so, but if anything happens, please do not say I did not warn you. Hello! here come the boys from the class-rooms. Clavering, show this boy around and introduce him to some of the Commercial boys?"

It took, as the boys say, "no time at all" for them to discover all the good as well as the bad traits of Gray. Boys are quick to learn one's foibles. The very first evening in the study-hall, an opportunity occurred by which those near him could test Gray's capacity of taking care of himself. It happened that the electric bulb just over Gray's desk was dark.

"Let's see what he will do," whispered a boy to his neighbor. Then turning to Gray he said :

"Say, sonny, here's a match; just light up that bulb, will you?"

The boy who "could take care of himself" struck the match on the sole of his shoe and held it up to the bulb while he peered and peered for a hole into which to insert the burning piece of wood. He knew nothing of using the key to turn on the current. He stood there puzzled until the match burned his fingers. There was a general titter through the study-hall. The professor who was keeping studies walked up to the boy and whispered :

"Sit down; go on with your work," and then turned on the current.

Secretly, during that hour of study, a note travelled to almost every desk bearing the following legend :

"Question. What color is Gray? Answer. Green."

Innumerable were the tricks and jokes played on him during the recesses between the evening study-hours.

One night during this time it had been arranged that Dick Clavering, Roy Henning and Shiller were to induce Gray to go to the game-room. With pretended secrecy they were to engage in a game of cards. As soon as they saw their plan would work, Fred Nash ran up to the sacristy and secured a server's cassock and a black beretta.

The others in the plan were to be sure to have the light in the game-room turned only moderately high. They were to pretend there was great—extremely great—danger of being caught. They were to impress upon Gray the necessity of caution, and to tell him that Mr. Shalford was simply "death" on card-playing, especially in the

game-room, and more especially during recess at night, and then to dare Gray to run all risks.

"He bites; in fact, he has swallowed the bait whole," whispered Shiller to Nash. Nash gave himself plenty of time to put on the soutane in the dark passage outside the game-room. It was arranged that Gray was to be seated with his back to the door. A loud cough from one of the players was to be the signal for Nash to make his quasi-prefectorial raid. Nash was not well known to Gray.

"Who said Gray was afraid?" said Clavering, as he shuffled the cards.

"You may just bet I'm afraid of nothing in this place," boasted John Philip Watkins Gray. "Old Shalford can't catch me in a hurry."

"Not even on electric lights," remarked Shiller, mischievously.

"Oh, give us a rest on that. How is a fellow to know everything?"

"Of course he isn't, and doesn't," answered Clavering, but Gray did not perceive the thrust. "But, my gracious, if Shalford should catch us! Phew! No more conduct cards for the rest of the year. No more baseball nor football for any of us. Not allowed to go to any of the Christmas plays. In jug for three months, and perhaps expulsion would be the least he would give us."

Gray, not perceiving the exaggeration, began to realize in some degree what he considered the danger of his position. The consequence was that there was a little paleness around his lips and his hand was not perfectly steady as he held his cards. Secretly he wished himself out of it. What would Father Holloway say if he were sent home!

"Then, card-playing here," continued Clavering, relentlessly, "may be punished by corporal punishment—in fact a sound thrashing from Father Lovelace or his deputy."

Beads of perspiration stood out on Gray's forehead. He felt uncomfortably warm under the collar. His hand became more unsteady. Just then Clavering coughed loudly two or three times.

"Cave! You'll give us away with your cough," said Shiller. "Look out! Here's some one coming," as he heard the door knob squeak. Suddenly the bogus prefect opened the door and stood behind Gray's chair.

"What is this?" said Nash, in a well-disguised voice. "Cards! Why will you boys get into trouble? What do you mean by this conduct, Gray?"

"I—I—didn't mean—I—"

"Nonsense. You did mean, or you wouldn't be here. Mr. Shalford or the President may send you boys home for this. I'll do what I can to prevent that. You three boys bring your Latin text-book to me to-morrow morning before breakfast. You, Gray, will write out 'I will not play cards any more,' five hundred times and give the lines to me before nine o'clock."

The imitation prefect then left the room in a hurry, shouting in the passage to some imaginary boys:

"Make less noise there, you boys; make less noise."

"I guess we are in for it now," said Clavering, with a very long face, which he assumed to perfection.

"Will he send us home?" asked the frightened Gray.

"It is most probable he will not, at least, if your lines are done by half past eight," answered Shiller. "I should recommend you to get at them at once. Don't let the study-keeper catch you writing them next hour, for if

he does he will double them, and then you couldn't save us."

During last recess that night, and even before Mass the next morning, and then after breakfast, steadily until about twenty minutes to nine did Gray work at those lines.

"They are done in time, anyway," he said, at length. Carrying seven or eight large sheets of paper closely written on both sides he went to find Mr. Shalford.

"They are done in time, sir," said the unconscious dupe who could take care of himself. It was a curious coincidence that Henning, Shiller, and Clavering should just at that moment be on the spot.

"Dear me! What's this, what's this?"

"The penance, sir; and I hope you won't send us home this time."

"Send you home! Why—" but his eye caught the first line, "I won't play cards any more," and he checked himself.

"Umph! Who gave you this penance?"

"The tall prefect. I don't know his name, sir. He caught us last night."

"The tall prefect? Was it the second prefect in this yard? See, he stands over there, look."

"No, sir; not he."

"Was it Mr. Silverton?"

"No, sir."

"Nor the other prefect of the junior division?"

"No, sir; I know him, too. It was one I don't know. What is his name, Clavering?"

Clavering was conveniently deaf just at that moment

"And I hope, sir, we shall not be thrashed."

This was too much for the three conspirators. They

burst into loud laughter and scattered across the yard, as they held their sides. Then Mr. Shalford understood.

"Gray."

"Yes, sir."

"Didn't you assure me that you could take care of yourself?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think you can?"

"Yes, sir," came the response promptly.

"Then let me tell you you can do no such thing. See that group of boys over there all laughing? You may rest assured that you will find the supposed prefect among them. They have fooled you most egregiously."

"You—don't—say," said the astonished Gray. "But he who caught me wore a cassock like yours."

"You dear simpleton! Do not the boys who serve Mass wear cassocks, and are there not dozens of them in the sacristy? Go and tell those boys I want them."

The four boys came, not knowing exactly what to expect.

"That was good, more or less, but listen. Don't—do—it—again."

The boys understood thoroughly.

"I guess the joke was on me, boys. Come, let's go to the store and get some candies."

The boys liked the way their dupe took the fooling, but John Philip Watkins Gray was not yet completely cured. Some boys require more experience than others. Gray required a great deal.

CHAPTER X.

CLAUDE'S LETTER.

THE letter which Claude Winters wrote to his father describing the sudden disappearance of his brother on the day of his arrival at St. Cuthbert's and the mysterious way he was discovered in the Bishop's room, remained unanswered for more than two weeks.

He, as well as Ernest, had received letters from their mother and from their sister Laura in the meantime, but no mention was made of Claude's first letter, nor had Mr. Winters written a line.

Thinking it somewhat strange that he should receive no word from his father, ten days after the first letter Claude sent off another, again stating all the circumstances of the disappearance and return of his brother.

After dinner, on the day following the successful ruse played on Gray, the boys were, as usual, clustered around the prefect at mail-time. They stood in a solid mass, resembling a swarm of bees resting after a long flight.

The distribution of the mail at college is an anxious five minutes to every boy. Eager eyes watch the big handful as it grows smaller and smaller. The lucky recipients of letters saunter off with a contented smile. The less fortunate ones more slowly disperse.

Claude was lucky to-day. At a glance he recognized the handwriting to be that of his father. It did not take Claude long to cross the yard. Up three steps at a time

he rushed like a tornado into the Philosophy class-room, and to his own desk.

"Not at home for half an hour, gentlemen."

The others understood. The expression was a convention used when any one of the class wished particularly to be let alone. Winters tore open the letter in his usual impetuous manner, hurriedly gave a glance at the contents and then read more slowly.

There was news from all. Mamma was poorly. Laura was not very bright. The writer believed she was pining for her little brother Ernest, but she would soon get over being without him. The parrot talked as well as ever. The cat was getting fatter and lazier than ever, etc., etc., etc.,

All these and many more similar items Claude read hurriedly. Ah! here, at last, was the matter of real interest to him.

、 "The disappearance of Ernie, which you speak of in your letter, puzzles me very much. Except for one or two reasons, which I cannot mention at present, I should be inclined to laugh at the occurrence, and say that your brother had wandered up to town alone and then back again, and entering the first room he came to, had fallen asleep at once and dreamed all you tell me in your letter. You know Ernie must have been very tired with his long journey.

"However, for reasons at which I have hinted, I attach much more importance to this event than I can at present explain to you. When your mother read your letter at breakfast that morning, she was much disturbed. Upon inquiring why she should be so strangely affected, she replied that as near as she could tell it was just at the

moment this was happening to your brother she fell asleep in her easy-chair. This was about half past five in the evening. She had dressed for dinner early that day and was waiting for the gong to sound when she dozed off.

"When she was aroused for dinner she told me that she had dreamed most vividly that she saw Ernest in a room just as your letter describes, and talking to a strange-looking, dark-skinned man. One remarkable feature about the affair is that at dinner that evening she talked of the large and wonderful eyes of the man she had seen in her dream. Then came your letter the next morning corroborating the description she had given of the event, and especially mentioning Ernie's words about the man's big eyes.

"Undoubtedly the man your brother saw was a Hindu. I should attach no importance to your mother's dream, and its peculiar coincidence, were there not reasons in our family history for making me decidedly uneasy. The dream and the attempted abduction—for I firmly believe, for reasons of my own, that there was the intention of abducting—of course, these two events occurring simultaneously may have been a mere coincidence. On the other hand they may have been something more.

"Now, I want you, Claude, to be very careful at all times to keep away from every person who has any resemblance to a Hindu. No matter on what occasion you come across one, or what dress or clothes he may be wearing, be sure to keep away from him. I have very strong reasons for laying this injunction upon you. Tell Ernest also of my wishes in this respect.

"I have no doubt, my boy, that all this has already

aroused your curiosity to a very high pitch. Well, restrain it for some time. You are in your graduating year at St. Cuthbert's. After you have taken your degree I shall be more free with you and shall tell you many points of family history which it will be well for you to know. But there is time enough for these things.

"Of one thing, however, you may be sure. There is nothing in all I have hinted to you, or have promised to tell in the future, that is in the slightest degree dishonorable to yourself, to me, or to any member of the family. There is nothing derogatory to the name you bear."

"If this isn't the rummiest letter I ever received!" said Claude, when he had finished. "Howard, come over here, will you?"

Howard Hunter came. Looking into the puzzled face of Claude, he asked in that sympathetic way so peculiarly his own:

"No bad news, I hope, Claude?"

"No; but something very curious. Read this, old fellow, and tell me what you think I ought to do," said Claude in a subdued tone, so that the rest in the room would not overhear.

Hunter began to read, making running comments as he proceeded.

"Dear me, that's awful about the poor parrot! and you certainly ought to call a physician for that cat. It might be suffering from fatty degeneration of the heart, you know. And poor little Laura! What shall we do? She will cry her eyes out, for sure. Really, Claude, it would be quite serious if your sister could only pose as a statue of Justice ever after."

Howard thought, as Claude had done, that the letter

before him, which began in a commonplace manner enough, was one of those which fond fathers and mothers send to their boys at school, containing nothing not domestic, and winding up with some dozen or so of X's for kisses.

But when he began to read the real body of the letter and to catch its drift, he became serious and dropped his bantering, reading the remainder in silence.

"Well, old fellow, what do you make of it?"

Hunter did not answer at once. He was in a "brown study" which Claude did not disturb. At length Claude asked:

"Well?"

"It is all very curious," replied the other. "It is certain there is some kind of mystery, which makes your father and mother anxious for your or Ernie's safety. As far as I can see, there is at present only one thing to do. Restrain your curiosity, as your father says, until he tells you everything, which he surely will do when he thinks the proper time has come."

"I just tell you what—I simply cannot wait. Until I know this mystery everything else will be knocked sky high out of my head. It's simply impossible, Howard; I must write."

Claude wrote that afternoon.

In a few days he received an answer from his father, who wrote:

"I have given your letter some close thought. After talking it all over with mamma, I have decided to tell you everything. This cannot be done by letter, so I will run down to St. Cuthbert's and have a talk with you. I do not want Ernie to know of my coming. Without let-

ting him know where you are, you had better meet me at the depot. We will go to some hotel together. Then I can return home the same evening. Ernie is young and not very strong. The information I am about to impart to you would perhaps do him harm. It is quite certain it would do him no good. With you it is different. You have almost arrived at man's estate. You are a good boy, a manly and honest boy, and, thanks be to God, a pious boy. So, in case anything should happen to your mother, I have thought it best to tell you everything. Meet me at the depot when the early train arrives next Monday morning."

Claude's heart beat faster when he read his father's words of praise of himself and he felt a choking sensation in his throat. He held the letter up in front of his face in order to hide his emotion from those in the room while he was reading it.

His pulse beat high with excitement when he thought of his father's visit. He could hardly wait the two days until Monday when he was to learn the family history.

CHAPTER XI.

SOME FAMILY HISTORY.

"You have often seen, in the drawing-room at home," said Mr. Winters to his son Claude, after the greetings were over at the hotel the following Monday morning, "that large oil painting of a Hindu in full native costume, to whom Ernest, according to your letter, likened the man who attempted to abduct him, and who certainly

would have abducted you had you happened to have been in his place. To this man whose picture I keep in a place of honor, I owe a great deal, perhaps even my life. He protected me once when I was in the extremest peril. He protected you, too."

"He protected me, pa?"

"Yes. You were born in a small town about seventy miles south of Simla in Northern India, nineteen years ago."

Claude was intensely surprised to hear this. In his heart of hearts he was sorry to learn it, sorry to discover that he was not American born. He had always believed he was, and was proud of being a native born American.

"It was while you were a baby in arms, not yet eighteen months old, that the trouble came which has made your mother a partial invalid ever since, and which has caused me endless anxiety.

"Your grandfather was an officer in the British army stationed in India. Some years before I married your mother, he was pensioned with full pay as colonel, owing to valuable services rendered to the crown.

"Not relishing—after so long a sojourn in India—the fogs and changeable climate of England, he determined to remain in the country where he had passed the best years of his life, intending to enjoy the remainder of his days in peace and contentment.

"He was stoutly, vigorously English in thought, sympathy, and even in speech, to the last day of his life. Among the many of his peculiarly English notions, one was that of the importance of the landed aristocracy and gentry as a necessary institution. These he considered the backbone of the English nation, and argued that if

they were good and beneficial for England they should also be good and beneficial for India, and for all other British possessions.

"Imbued with these notions he built a magnificent mansion, cleared and laid out a large and really beautiful park. He kept his hounds, and in every respect conducted his establishment after the English customs and traditions, as near as the circumstances of time and place would permit.

"When I married, my father erected a second elegant residence, intended for me. In this way, by gradually inducing his friends also to settle and build in the vicinity, he hoped in a short time to establish a select class of Anglo-Indian landed gentry in his neighborhood.

"Now, in purchasing property for the purpose of laying out his park, my father bought, with the sanction of the government, from the Rajah or Maharajah of the district, some land on which stood a shrine of Vishnu or Siva.

"Your grandfather was a good, staunch Catholic, who, above all things, would have no compromise in matters concerning the faith. You can easily see, then, that he would not tolerate the existence of a pagan temple on his property. He therefore ordered it to be demolished.

"Little did he realize, by so doing, the animosity that he had incurred among the natives. Still less did he see the whole train of evils he was bequeathing to his kith and kin. He incurred the implacable hatred and deep resentment of the native Hindus.

"My father entrenched himself behind the law, for he took the matter into the English tribunals. It was a case where justice and equity were on his side, but where also, on his part, there was, more or less, a want of prudence.

The judges declared him to be correct from a legal point of view. His own conscience was sufficient guide from a moral standpoint. Being a retired officer and also a general favorite among officers and men, he had no difficulty in procuring a small detachment of soldiers from Simla to protect his family and his property.

"Irrespective of the necessity for this protection on account of being a *persona non grata* to the natives surrounding his estate, there were other reasons why a small company of soldiers was a source of satisfaction to our little white settlement.

"Down to the south of us, at Chour, there was at this time a sort of religious revival movement among the Brahmins. I never learned the reason of this movement, but I know that thousands upon thousands of native Hindus visited the small temple there to the great pecuniary advantage of the priests.

"Some kind of miracle was reported to have taken place here. I once visited the temple. A small, dirty, ill-kept place it was. It was always a surprise to me that the natives should throng to visit what was not worth seeing. The only thing really remarkable there was a fine large diamond, which had been placed in the forehead of the statue. It was called the Learned One's Earthly Sight, or something of that kind.

"My father suggested that I take you and your mother to the garrison of Simla, where, if anything should happen, your mother would be under the protection of the British soldiery. It was a wise suggestion. Affairs looked ominous. Religious fanaticism was growing. Notwithstanding the soldiers stationed at his residence, my father was in real danger. Soon came the pillage of the temple of

Chour. The natives having once tasted blood, scattered through the country doing much damage to the property of European and native land owners.

"The fanatical people around my father's estate saw they were powerless so long as the soldiers remained. In time their resentment appeared to die out. We began to think the unpleasantness had blown over, the more so as my father gave employment to hundreds of Hindus in improving his estate. Your mother and I had spent the heated term in Simla and were both possessed of the strongest desire to get back into the open country.

"We determined to start for the country in three days' time. We gave orders to the servants to prepare for the journey.

"On the evening before our departure I was sitting on the veranda in order to enjoy what little breeze there was. Your mother was resting in a light easy cane chair just inside the glass door. You were fast asleep in your cradle at her side. I had been on the veranda only a few minutes when an orderly of the fort came to the railing. After giving the military salute, he said :

"'Mr. Winters, there is one of them heathen Hindus at the fort gate. He says he must see the colonel's son on important business. He says, too, sir, that he must not be seen by any of the natives around the garrison. It looks very suspicious to me, sir, and, if I may be so bold, I should advise ye to have a care of yourself and the good lady within, there.'

"Thanking the orderly, I told him to admit the native—that I would see him on the lawn in front of the house in the glare of the electric light. Telling my wife that I was going to take a turn around the garden path, I pur-

posely walked some distance away from the house. In a minute I saw the white turban of a tall Hindu as he hid behind some oleander bushes.

“‘Come out here if you wish to speak to me,’ I said.

“‘Nay, Sahib, my life would not be worth a bowl of rice were I seen.’

“‘Oh, nonsense! What is all this mystery about? Who are you anyway?’ I asked.

“‘Samaba,’ he whispered.

“‘Samaba! Is that you? What brings you here? Is anything wrong with my father at home? Has anything happened? Speak! Quick, quick!’

“‘Samaba was an old body-servant of my father. He had cared for me when I was young. Many a time he had carried you for hours together up and down the paths of our country seat. To all of us Samaba was the incarnation of fidelity and devotion. We would as soon have thought of suspecting ourselves as suspect his loyalty to our family.

“‘Ah! young Sahib, all is well. The Great Sahib (so he always spoke of my father) is well and unharmed. The danger lies not with him now.’

“‘Then why have you come all this distance, and why do you act so mysteriously?’ I asked.

“‘Come into the shadow of this tree, Sahib, and I will tell you all. Your father, the Great Sahib, is safe only because he is so well guarded by the English soldiers. My people know that if anything were done to him or to you, the soldiers would wreak terrible vengeance on them. They, therefore, appear to have forgotten their anger. One would think their smouldering fanaticism had died out. But be not deceived, my lord; a Hindu’s revenge

never dies. It may lie dormant for a generation, but it is unrelenting and inexorable. It is handed down from father to son. In this case of your father, Sahib, it is more unrelenting because tinged with religious fanaticism. Therefore have I come to warn the Little Sahib.'

" 'Warn—me! Of what, Samaba?' I inquired in alarm.

" 'Of this, Sahib: The priests of Brahminism in the neighborhood of your country home have decided to wreak their vengeance, not on your father, nor on you—neither of you dare they touch—but upon your son, the baby Sahib, whom I have so often carried and folded in these arms. Oh, sorrow, sorrow! darkness and black grief!'

"The faithful old man's tall form literally swayed to and fro like some lithe withe in the excess of his grief.

" 'Tell me!' I cried, 'what is in store for my child?'

" 'They intend to steal the child,' he replied; 'but whether they intend to kill him or merely to hold him as a hostage I have not been able to learn. At the risk of my life have I warned you. Should any of my tribe discover that I have done this, the bow-string or poison would be my fate. Farewell, Sahib. May the Little Sahib be forever happy.'

"The faithful fellow had glided away into the darkness before I could thank him or put a few rupees into his hand. You may imagine my anxiety. I at once sent a letter by a fast-running messenger to my father. In three days I received his answer. He strongly urged me to take you and your mother to England and remain there for a few years. As for himself, he declared that having taken the stand he had, he did not intend to give up the fight. He lived on his estate for three years longer, when he suc-

cumbed to an attack of jungle fever, but not, thank God, without receiving all the Sacraments of Holy Church.

"As it was with your grandfather, so it was with me and with your mother. Neither of us liked the cold, changeable, foggy climate of England. After remaining there for one year we sold our English property in London and I became a citizen of the United States.

"Before leaving India, I settled a fair competency on Samaba, who, when he became his own master, elected to leave that portion of the country where he believed his life was in danger owing to his devotion to our family. He settled in Calcutta, from which place I heard of him half-yearly through the kindness of an English officer.

"He died five years after the events I have just related. A year before his death my correspondent succeeded in getting the faithful old servant to sit for his photograph. From this I ordered the large oil painting which now hangs in our drawing-room. It is a perpetual reminder of the gratitude due to the faithful old man, who undoubtedly saved your life and most probably mine and your mother's, too, for if they had attempted to rob me of you, I should have fought desperately, although it is more than probable I should have been overpowered by numbers.

"So you see, my dear Claude," said Mr. Winters, when he had finished the strange story, "the necessity for the caution I gave you about having anything to do with any traveling Hindus or fakirs you may come across. However, do not let this bit of family history influence you too much. I mean in this sense: Do not get morbid about it. After the lapse of nearly twenty years the whole affair may have passed from the memory of every one interested in it in India and the whole question of revenge be forgot-

ten. Remember that we live in the United States, where it is a moral impossibility for such strange and weird things to happen as could more or less easily take place in a less thoroughly organized country as India was at that time, when the territory I speak of was governed by the native Rajahs, who were only restrained from acts of despotism by the fear of summary justice administered by a neighboring regiment of English soldiers.

"A third reason why you should not worry about this—and from what I know of you I feel sure this will be a more telling one—is that we must never forget there is an overruling Providence that directs all our ways. Nothing can harm us, my boy, but sin. Therefore pray every day, not only for yourself, but for me, for mother, for Laura and Lily, and all the children and, of course, for Ernest, as we all pray for you every day."

And now, while Claude Winters is thinking over his strange family history, we must leave him for a time and go back to events that are transpiring among the other boys at St. Cuthbert's.

CHAPTER XII.

AN HONORABLE COMBINATION.

GREAT excitement was caused in the yard one morning in October when Mr. Shalford announced that with the President's sanction and approval he had determined to have a fall field-day of sports and games.

He told the boys there were to be several track events, sprinting, pole, long, and high jumping, and many other

things such as delight the hearts of boys—that is, of real boys. He had secured a whole day's holiday. The town band had been engaged. There was to be a big feast in the refectory.

The glad news was received with great enthusiasm. Practice for the various events began at once. Entries would be received on the fifteenth of the month.

"You know the weather is uncertain and capricious in October," said the prefect, "you must, therefore, all of you, pray for a fine day on the last Thursday of October. These games depend altogether on the weather. We have had a fine spell for some time, but it may change soon. If this should happen, the races and trials of skill will be postponed until spring."

In consequence of the coming event, there was much animation throughout the college, both on the track, in the field, and in the yard. Everywhere practice was going on for one event or another.

It has been stated that our friends of the Philosophy class had on the first day of term noticed with dissatisfaction the peculiarly rough and uninviting appearance of many of the new boys. As time went on, it was found that appearances were more or less true indications of interior dispositions, and of manners. It was thought that the college influence would mold and elevate these characters—that the new element would soon be assimilated—so that the tone of the yard would not be degenerated. Many of the older boys in the upper classes, after watching the trend of events for some time, were not over sanguine of immediate results.

Of one thing the prefect was more or less certain. These undesirable boys, and there were more than a dozen of

them this year—were not morally bad boys. Had this been the case, any one who knows anything of St. Cuthbert's would tell you that their college career would come to a speedy end.

But their tone was low. They were troublesome. Those in authority were their natural enemies. Many rules were broken with impunity. Their influence over younger and more easily led boys was, if not decidedly bad, at least dangerous and altogether undesirable.

It may be asked, are such boys really found to exist in Catholic colleges, or are they only put into books as a dark background for brighter and better characters? The answer is, that unquestionably they do exist in real school life. To picture a perfectly ideal state of things, and only the best, even in the very best Catholic institutions, would be to portray the unreal and the impossible. A college is a little world in itself. As in the bigger outside world there exist the good and the bad elements, so in a gathering of two or three hundred boys it would be a moral impossibility for all to be ideally good. It would be a perversion of the truth to describe all as good, all as actuated by the nobler motives which should guide our actions.

It may be asked, if a bad element, a lowering influence, be found in our Catholic colleges, why do fond mothers and fathers send their dearly loved ones to such places? The answer is not far to seek. The fond mothers and fathers know better than probably you and I, gentle reader, that very often, indeed it may be safe to say, always, the evil influence of the bad upon their sons is very much less at college than elsewhere. Mothers and fathers realize that men who conduct such institutions make it a life-work

of zeal and love. Their whole attention is given to the training of the morals of youth. Added to this, their large experience in the guidance of youth, which is rarely possessed by the individual father or mother, and the question is fairly answered.

It is precisely because these pages are intended to reflect actual facts of real college life, that we have to deal with some boys of undesirable dispositions. A college, as has been said, as well as the world, is composed of the good as well as the bad. It is only by contrasting the one with the other, that the nobler traits of boy nature are brought out in strong relief.

Among the troublesome boys at St. Cuthbert's, Ralph Ditson and John Gregson were unquestionably the worst. Of the latter we made mention when relating the fight which took place between him and Claude Winters the year before. He had not improved since that time. Up to all sorts of mischief—not the kind which expends itself in harmless practical jokes, but rather of that kind which was sure to have more or less malice in it—Gregson was forever in hot water with his professors and with the prefects. Not actually bad enough to be expelled, he was at best a most troublesome boy, giving endless anxiety to those in authority.

Ralph Ditson was little better. Consequently these two were bosom friends. Where one was, there the other was sure to be. It was rare that one was under punishment without having the other as a companion in misery.

Now these two boys were good athletes. They could hold their own in nearly every kind of manly exercise. The consequence of this was, that they always had a large following of younger boys—boys of an age when they are

prone to be hero-worshippers. Had the prestige honestly gained by superiority in games of strength and skill been rightly used, no one would have objected to the influence they wielded.

Unfortunately this very influence was dangerous in their hands. It was used against authority, against discipline, against order. Those who were under their influence, in some unknown, imperceptible way descended in their own estimation, and in the esteem of others. The followers of Ditson and Gregson lost that subtle, mysterious thing which in college language has its own specific signification, and is designated as "tone."

The acknowledged excellence of their athletic powers, as well as their pernicious influence over others, was shown on the day of Mr. Shalford's announcement of the autumn games, by a caustic notice being pinned on the bulletin board. It ran thus:

NOTICE:

Those desirous of being trained for the fall games can apply to

Ditson and Gregson,
General Rule Breakers,
Toughness Cultivated,
No Regard Paid to Tone,
Slang a Specialty.

Of course the note remained on the board only a few minutes. The prefect promptly removed it, but not before several dozen boys had read it, among whom was Gregson. He was furious. His face flushed crimson with anger.

"I can lick the fellow that done that," was his ungrammatical remark.

"Can ye?" remarked Gilkins, "and suppose I did it?"

"If it was, I—" but Gilkins' big form towered above Gregson, and he did not finish his threat.

"Well, it wasn't, anyway," continued Gilkins, "but I'd hide my head if such things were ever written about me, whether I found the man who did it or not."

Gregson walked off, determined to find out who put up the notice, but in this he was never successful.

That afternoon after classes were over, Claude Winters came flying across the yard, in his usual impetuous way, to where Mr. Shalford was standing. As soon as he had regained sufficient breath to speak coherently, he said:

"Please, sir, I'm come to ask for a favor. Will you grant it, sir?"

"How can I?"

"You can if you will, sir?"

"But how can I if I do not know what it is? Look here, Sunbeam, do you not know I cannot act in the dark? What do you want, anyway?"

"We want permission, sir, for Rob Jones, Bracebridge, Roy Henning and—who else?—oh, yes, and Gilkins—to come up to the Philosophy class-room."

"What for?"

"We are going to have a meeting."

"What about?"

"That's a secret, sir. Can't tell you yet. But there's nothing wrong about it, sir."

"I'm sure of that, Claude. All right, they may go."

"And, sir, if Hunter and the others want some more boys, may I fetch them up, too?"

"Most mysterious, all this," said Mr. Shalford. "I suppose it's all right. I may drop in unawares, though."

"Thank you, sir;" and shortly after, Gilkins and the three Rhetoric boys were ushered into the Philosophy

class-room with all due solemnity. They had ~~not~~ the remotest idea why they had been invited.

"We thought we would call a meeting," said Howard Hunter, when they were all seated, "and discuss the forthcoming field-day.

"You know, fellows—oh, excuse me, you know, gentlemen—that things are not going well in the yard so far this year. There is one crowd always together, rain or shine. I believe there is a good deal of loose talk going on among them and the thing seems to be spreading. Only to-day I heard some boys use expressions in the yard which they would not have dreamed of doing this time last year."

"There was enough of it last year, Stapleton," said Rob Jones, blushing at the remembrance of his own share, "at least there was enough of it before Buckley ran away, and I broke my leg."

"We are not talking of that time, old man," said Stapleton, kindly, "but of the present. Last year's events are dead and gone. We have to deal with the present."

"What do you propose to do?" asked Roy Henning, who from a rather timid and somewhat girlish character of last year, had lately developed into a strong, robust, athletic young man.

"The case is this," resumed Stapleton, who seemed to have been the appointed spokesman of the informal meeting, "there is no denying the fact that Gregson and Ditson are good all-round athletes. That's all right if it stopped there, but it doesn't. You know how boys—all of us—admire success in games of strength and skill. Now these fellows—I wouldn't in the least object to them having their admirers if their influence over those who admire them was turned to good account."

"Isn't it?" asked Ambrose Bracebridge.

"Indeed, Ambrose, I am sorry to say it is not."

"How do you know?"

"From what I see. From what I can't help seeing. And then the stuff these fellows read! Eugh! and their talk is—well, it isn't what a college boy's ought to be. Why, I actually heard one of these fellows swearing this very afternoon!"

"But after all," said Henning, "what can we do about it? It's the prefect's place to look after these things."

"Can a man be in a hundred places at once?" asked Frank, "and don't these fellows scatter just as soon as Mr. Shalford comes near them?"

"What does that mean?" asked Bracebridge.

"It means there is something wrong, something they are ashamed of; something they would not like their mothers or sisters to hear."

"Oh!" said Bracebridge.

"But what can we do about it?" again asked Henning.

"Well, I have talked long enough," said Stapleton. "Now let Howard or somebody else suggest a remedy."

"Whether it will prove a remedy or not," said Hunter, "I am not sure, but I think the experiment is worth trying. You know they are good at games. Every game won by them is more influence in the yard for them. Now, what I propose is this. Let us all make a most determined and vigorous effort to carry off, if not all, at least by far the greater number of the prizes in the fall field-day. Let us all go into hard training and do our very best to win. It is a fair and open way of trying to down an unwholesome influence. What do you say, boys?"

The idea was received with enthusiasm.¹ All promised

to win the prizes for principle's sake; at least they all added this extra motive for winning. Every one promised to go into special training for some particular event.

"Look here, gentlemen," said Gilkins, "I don't know what you invited me to this meeting for. I guess most of the time since I've been here I have been regarded as rather belonging to the other gang. Isn't that so?"

"No, no, no," came a chorus of voices. "You're all right."

"No, indeed," said Harry Selby, "never after you changed that red necktie! Look here, old man, we all think a great deal of you. You're the right sort—a diamond in the rough a little, but a true diamond all the same."

"Good gracious! you fellows make me blush. However, if you think I am all O. K. I'm with you heart and soul—but I don't know what influence I have with those fellows. I don't know what I can do."

"Lots," said Howard Hunter, "much more than you think. With your size and strength, with those big fists and big feet of yours, when you put your foot down—metaphorically of course—on a shady scheme, or a dangerous proposal from these fellows, don't you think the scheme or proposal stays down?"

"I guess it does; at all events it will for the future."

"Well, then, see?"

Gilkins saw. He saw that size and strength could be used to a good purpose if only the intention be correct.

Claude Winters took a keen interest in the progress of the meeting. He did not say much for some time. He looked a good deal out of the window. There was in his eye a strange—strange for him—reminiscent twinkle.

This meeting and the work these upper boys proposed to themselves reminded him strongly of a certain five-cornered medal he carried in his vest pocket. Wasn't all this precisely the work of the Secret Society of the Perpetual Lily which Mr. Hillson established last year. He was sure that some of the speakers were members, but true to his promise to Mr. Hillson he did not attempt to find out who they were. But wouldn't he have glorious news to tell Mr. Hillson in his next letter to him!

Mr. Shalford came in when the conversation had become general. The boys were then freely discussing the ways and means of carrying out their individual plans.

"I heartily approve of your plans, boys," he said. "They are perfectly honorable. There must be nothing under-hand, otherwise the scheme defeats itself."

"Why, of course, sir," said several. Such a proposition needed no discussion.

"That's right. I have rarely known boys who want to win prizes from other motives than cash value or honor," he said.

"Not even a certain Rhetoric class, sir," said Stapleton, with a pretended simplicity, but at the same time with a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

"No, not even that," admitted the prefect, laughingly.

That evening, after supper, the members of the honorable combination commenced to practice in earnest, some with the wheel, some at sprinting, others at jumping, hurdle racing, and the other games which go to make up a college field-day.

CHAPTER XIII.

PLANS.

THE result of the meeting of the boys of the two upper classes respecting the plan by which they might honorably capture the greater number of the prizes was, as has been stated, that every one was to set to work at once to fit himself by hard practice to compete in some event. It was decided that with regard to the principal wheel race Frank Stapleton and Ambrose Bracebridge should practice together, so that one could pace the other. Ambrose was in reality already a splendid wheelman. Stapleton was a close second. It was agreed between the two that just before the time for closing the entries on the day before the field-day, he who was then considered the speedier of the two should enter for the chief event—the mile race. The other was to enter for the next important event of their class.

Rob Jones found it impossible to enter for any of the contests owing to the accident of the year before in which he broke his leg.

"If I can't do anything toward our success on the field," he said, "I can pray for the success of others, and you bet I'm going to do that."

"Thanks, old fellow," said Howard Hunter.

The boys did not know exactly how to utilize big Gilkins in the furtherance of their plans. His chief qualification was sheer strength. Yard practice in football—which

amid all the preparations for the field-day had by no means been neglected—made it quite clear that he would be an acquisition to the eleven, but in sprinting, wheeling, or jumping it was as evidently clear that he was not up to the required standard.

"It's a pity we can't utilize his great strength in some way," remarked Harry Selby, "he is turning out to be a jolly good fellow. I was talking to him this morning. He is terribly in earnest about our side winning by far the greater share of the prizes."

"Whoop! I have it!" exclaimed Claude Winters. "Go and fetch him, Nash, quick!"

Gilkins soon came.

"Say, Gilkins," asked Claude, "have you decided what event you are going to enter for?"

"I really don't see any chance for me. I'm not speedy enough for the foot races. Wheeling is not exactly in my line, nor is jumping either. I'm awfully sorry, but I can't see that I'm going to be of any use whatever."

"Look here," said Claude, "can't you throw the hammer or put the shot? You know these things are on the lists."

"Of course, of course! I never thought of that. Why, of course! There wasn't a man in our village who could touch me on these two things. I'll enter for both of them. I'd like to see the man here who could beat me. Glad you mentioned it."

"First-rate!" said Hunter, "splendid!"

"What's the matter with Gilkins?" shouted Claude.

"He's—all—right!" promptly responded the group, after the approved style.

"But look here, boys. I've been thinking about some-

thing else." There was a puzzled look in Gilkins' face. His tone of voice was decidedly despondent.

"What's the matter now, Cornstalks?" asked Claude.

Gilkins, by this time, was used to Winters' teasing ways. He took no notice of the nickname, yet it was noticed by the others that Claude always kept safely at arm's length from Gilkins when he used it.

"It's just this," he replied, "suppose I do win these two prizes, what good will it do you people? Guess I am no good anyhow. My influence is nothing. If I told one of those other fellows that this or that thing was wrong and shouldn't be done, ten to one he would go and do it just because I objected. I can't be of any help, because if I win anything those fellows will count it as a victory for themselves, of course thinking I am on their side. Say, boys, I'm terrible sorry I gave trouble in the beginning of the year."

The committee on prize-winning saw there was something in Gilkins' remarks. As yet he did not have much influence in the yard, but owing to his great strength he was sure to win the two prizes. The question was how to make them available for the end the boys proposed.

"I see your difficulty," said Howard Hunter, "we will try to get a solution for it. There! there's the bell for studies. We will talk over this again after class. Meet us here again, will you? We must try to find some way to make you useful for the 'good of the cause' you know."

"I wish I could think of some sure way myself," answered the big fellow.

"I really wish something would turn up," said Hunter, as they separated, "which would establish Gilkins' posi-

tion in the yard so that everybody might clearly know on which side he was."

"A good fight, for instance?" suggested Selby.

"Not exactly that—but something or other, I don't know what."

As good fortune would have it, the "something or other" did turn up, and on that very day. It all happened in this wise. Gilkins was sitting on one of the yard benches. Near him sat Gregson, who was talking to a companion. The conversation was not of the choicest, it being interlarded with many slang expressions, to many of which more than one meaning could be attached. The two were discussing a dime novel. From their running criticism, the book must have been of a very lurid character.

"Oh, shut up," said Gilkins, earnest at the expense of politeness, "that's no kind of talk to use here."

"It's none of your business what kind of talk I make use of," said Gregson.

"Hm-m! well, it is my business. I don't like it, and you've got to stop it—at least in my hearing," said the young giant, emphatically.

"Ho, ho! did you hear that? Cornstalks is getting sanctimonious all of a sudden. I suppose I'll have to ask leave to say anything at all next, or—or get my name posted on the bulletin board again by some sneak."

"Do you mean to accuse me of that mean trick?" Gilkins rose and faced Gregson, who began to cower.

"I ain't accusing nobody—yet," said the ungrammatical Gregson, "but I'll get even with those who did it—you'll see."

"It's lucky for you, my fine fellow, you did not accuse me of that," said the other. "But what I was saying is,

that at least when I am around you've got to stop that slangy, shady talk. It don't go, mind."

In his excitement Gilkins' diction was not elegant, but no one could doubt his sincerity. By this time a crowd of boys had gathered around the disputants. Among them were Hunter, Falvey, Bracebridge, Nash, and Henning.

"Good for you, Gilkins," said Nash, "stick up for what you know is right. Don't be afraid."

Hunter pulled Nash's coat in warning.

"Don't interfere," he whispered, "let Gilkins alone. He can take care of himself all right. You might spoil his game. I confess, as yet, I do not see what he is driving at."

The crowd which had gathered around the two boys was about equally divided. About half were staunch admirers of Gregson. The rest more or less despised him and would not regret to see his prestige toppled over. This worthy saw that he was not making much headway against Gilkins. So he determined on a bold stroke, relying on his adherents to see him through if matters came to the worst. Assuming a bragging air he began:

"Look here, I don't allow anybody to dictate to me what I shall say."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed, and any fellow who tries it on has got to fight me first."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, that's so. Are you willing to fight?"

"No."

"Why? You're afraid."

"Not much. If you want to know very badly why I won't thrash you—I don't say fight you, mind—why I

won't thrash you, this is the reason, and I don't care who knows it. I'm going to get along in this college, and I'm going to keep the rules as far as I can. See? that's the reason why I won't have a fight with you."

Brave old Gilkins! A diamond in the rough, perhaps, but beneath the rough exterior there was, after all, a heart as true as steel. The heart beneath the homespun is as true as—often truer—than that beating beneath the broad-cloth. The occasion called for a certain moral courage, and the boy, crude, and even uncouth, if you will, destitute as yet of the advantages of an education, lacking polish, refinement, grace, rose equal to the occasion. He had found his opportunity for showing to which party he belonged.

"Dear me! isn't he getting—" began Gregson, but Howard Hunter interrupted. He saw it was time to lend support. He gave a signal to Nash, who appeared to be spokesman.

"Good for you, old man," shouted Nash, once more. "That's the stuff."

Several others cheered. The Gregson following was silent. Their leader saw he was getting the worst of it.

"I despise a boy who won't fight," he said.

"And I despise one who will, unless there's a good reason," replied Gilkins.

"Oh, you're afraid—that's what you are."

"That's what you say. Wait. The time may come when you will find you are wrong there."

"Hello! what's the rumpus?" shouted Claude Winters, as he came running up to the crowd.

"Oh, nothing. Only Gilkins has turned preacher," said a bystander.

"Good for you, old man! I'll be one of your congregation. Now for your 'fifthly.' I'm all attention."

Claude's remarks were made just at the right time. Every one knew and admired the sterling character of Winters. His presence was everywhere like a sunbeam, ever smiling, ever happy. He was one of those boys who wielded a great, but unconscious, moral influence. He never preached, never obtruded himself, was no prig, yet there was no other boy in the college, with perhaps the exception of Howard Hunter, who had such an unsought influence for good among his companions.

After his words there was no possibility of mistaking for the future to which of the two camps Gilkins now belonged. His own manly declaration of his avowed intention of "keeping straight" won him the admiration of many of the neutrals. Unknown to himself he had already begun to have a following of his own. Big, strong, and a very promising center-rush on the college eleven, he was looked up to by many in the yard with that admiration which strength and skill are ever wont to create in youthful minds. An event that followed increased this admiration.

"Go on with your sermon, parson," said Claude. "Where were you—fifthly or sixthly?"

"Oh, you just mind your business, Winters," said Gregson, "I'm running this thing."

"I don't think you are—much," remarked Gilkins.

"Yes, I am, and I tell you what I think of you."

"What?"

"You won't fight me?"

"No."

"Then you are a—"

"What's that!"

"—coward!"

At this word Gilkins did a thing which he should not have done, and I do not attempt to excuse him. I only ask the reader to consider the provocation. He did not intend to engage in a fight, but the imputation of cowardice was hard to hear. The hot blood rushed to his head. For a moment he was on the point of losing his self-control. Fortunately, just at the right moment, he caught Hunter's eye. In it he read the signal "don't fight, but stand your ground." This steadied him. He nodded to Hunter that he understood. Going close up to Gregson's side, he said:

"Young fellow, if you were nearer my size I would make you take that word back. As it is you had better take a tumble."

Gregson had a very rapid experience for the next quarter of a minute. Gilkins planted his right foot firmly at the heels of Gregson. He then passed the fore part of his right arm under the chin of the boy who had called him names. Gilkins suddenly raised his arm, and Gregson was "chucked" under the chin. He lost his balance, sitting down in the gutter in a pool of mud—the only pool in the yard.

For a moment there was perfect silence among the boys. No one knew how the affair would end. It was as if two stags had met in a forest glade. Unquestionably Gregson was the most surprised boy of all. Dark waves of passion chased one another across his, by no means too handsome, face.

Now when the fallen boy prepared to rise, he necessarily put his hands to the ground. Being for the nonce

seated in a mud puddle his hands also soon became covered with a thick coating of the same undesirable material. He presented to his admirers, as he began to get up, a most undignified appearance for a hero.

Ridicule is a powerful weapon as a destroyer of prestige. Just at the moment when affairs looked the most ominous, a clear, silvery treble voice was heard giving way to a burst of most enjoyable, uncontrollable laughter. It was infectious. Everybody at once began to see the funny side of things.

"Oh, isn't he a dude, now?" said one.

Laughter over Gregson's plight became general. Peal followed peal, shout succeeded shout, until there was not a boy in the group who had witnessed the tumble but was now holding his sides in glee.

"Scrape him with a shingle," said a mischievous small boy.

"Better borrow a hoe," remarked another.

What could Gregson do? It was impossible amid all this merriment and ridicule to keep up a semblance of anger. Gilkins had to laugh, too.

"Oh, really, I—he, he, he!—I beg your pardon, Gregson—he, he, hi—I didn't know there was a mud hole—he, he, he, he!—a mud hole behind you or I wouldn't have tripped you. Indeed I wouldn't."

The mortified boy was quite sharp enough to see that when the laugh had been turned so thoroughly against him, it was not wise to show his anger. He determined to abide his time and "get even." How he did this we shall see later.

"What on earth have you been doing with yourself?" asked Mr. Shalford, as he came up at the moment Greg-

son had risen to his feet. "Here's one little mud spot in the whole yard, and you must select that to fall in!"

"Can I have the lavatory key, sir?" asked the crest-fallen boy.

"Of course, under the circumstances. You had better send some one to your trunk for another suit of clothes. Then you can go to the bathroom and take a bath and a change."

And thus Gilkins, in a way he had not intended, greatly diminished the influence and the prestige which Gregson had held. Among the boys there was no mistaking his intentions. He was pledged for the law and order side. The open declaration that "I am going to get along in this college and I am going to keep the rules as far as I can," gained for him many friends. He had the satisfaction now of knowing that any victories won by him at the field-day sports would have their full effect. No one was surprised, therefore, now to see Gilkins leave the yard for the practice-field arm in arm with Hunter and Stapleton.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GREAT DAY ARRIVES.

ON the last Thursday of October at least twenty boys jumped out of their beds long before the great bell had tolled the hour for rising. They wanted to know what kind of weather they might expect.

The great field-day dawned with the clearest of blue skies. There was not a cloud to be seen. Late in the year as it was, the day promised to be warm and cheer-

ful. But for the more gorgeous autumn coloring of the trees one might have imagined that the occasion was the annual field-day in June, instead of an extra one late in the autumn.

Both boys and prefects were jubilant. Mr. Shalford was ubiquitous. He seemed to have a thousand things to attend to, little details which all required his own personal supervision.

The first surprise of the day was the breakfast. Hot biscuits, pone, steak, and breakfast bacon and—yes, actually—plate after plate of hot buttered toast. How could the cooks get it all ready by seven o'clock? Then when the boys thought the sumptuous meal was over, the dozen serving-boys in their white suits and caps, trooped in, bearing trays of delicious fruits, oranges, apples, pears, bananas, plums even, and slices of late cool red water-melon!

But this was only a beginning to the surprises of the day. Immediately after breakfast came the ceremony of raising the college flag, amid the singing of college songs, yells, and ringing cheers. This standard was an immense one, some forty feet long. It had been presented to the college by some of the alumni of St. Cuthbert's as a mark of their devotion to their alma mater. The flag was used only on very special occasions, such as Easter, Christmas, breaking-up day, Washington's birthday, when some very distinguished guest was visitor, when some great glory had fallen to the college football or baseball teams, or finally when the news came that some great honor had come to an alumnus of the college, either in Church or State.

When the flag rose slowly above the heads of the boys,

it was a charming sight to watch them—a company of as pure-hearted, generous, handsome boys as ever gathered together in one college. Caps waved in the air. Shouts and songs echoed back from the tall buildings as the great folds of the standard were gently lifted in the breeze, telling the sleepy town below that there were great doings at the college.

“Wouldn’t it be better, sir,” asked John Gregson, of the prefect, “that no wheels be allowed on the track or anywhere until the wheel races begin this afternoon?”

“Why?”

“Oh, because—because if we go wheeling much before the races we shall all be too tired to make good time.”

“That’s something of a reason. At all events I do not want any wheels on the grounds this morning on account of the marking of the distances, so, as you suggest, it may be a good plan to keep the wheel-room locked until after dinner. Here, Winters, get one boy from each class and come to my room for programs in ten minutes. Tell each boy to give only to his classmates, otherwise we shall not have enough to go around this afternoon when the visitors come.”

Ditson and Gregson and a third boy named Hollister were talking together very mysteriously when Winters passed them with a bundle of programs in his hand. In spite of the manager’s injunctions he could not help giving each one of these boys a program. It was with an almost malicious twinkle in his eyes he saw the amazement on Gregson’s face when that boy discovered that nearly every one of the Philosophers, as well as Gilkins, Henning, and Bracebridge, had entered for one or other of the different events.

"Hang it all!" Winters heard him say as he passed on, "those fellows have done this merely to down us. I knew last night that Bracebridge was going to run against me in the mile wheel race, but I had no idea that all these fellows were going to enter."

Winters, of course, reported all he had heard to the committee in the Philosophy class-room. Gregson's consternation caused some amusement, but more than one was nervous as to results.

"I am sorry that those fellows knew yesterday that Ambrose would be pitted against Gregson. That they knew this so much earlier than we intended makes me uneasy," said Hunter.

"Why should it?" asked Stapleton. "There's no time now for extra practices, and no wheels are to be out this morning."

"Oh, I don't know why—I can't tell why. I suppose I am fidgety. Hello, Bracebridge, how are you? In good form, eh? Do you think you will come out all right this afternoon?"

"I think so," answered Ambrose, modestly; "I never felt in better form. My nerves are under perfect control; generally, I may say, I'm in good shape. I see there are eight entries for the mile race. Will there be heats?"

"No. The track is wide enough for all to run at once," said Howard. "Good luck, old fellow; I should advise you not to attend the games this morning, but rest for the afternoon. The morning events are only for novices and for the small boys, chiefly. Too much depends on your race for you to be in anything but the pink of condition when you start."

It was as Howard had said. The events of minor im-

portance came off in the morning. The great events were reserved for the afternoon, when the public from the town would be admitted to the grounds.

During the forenoon Fred Nash's base running against time elicited much applause, and gained the first prize for those who were trying to win "for principle's sake." There was also some excellent work done in pole vaulting. To Claude Winters' surprise he was awarded a first. These were all the prizes our friends captured in the morning.

Gregson, Ditson, and their followers, were much more successful. Their side captured the long standing jump, which was won by Hollister. The first prize for the sixty-five yard high hurdle was lost to the "committee," being taken in very fine style by Gregson himself. The hop-step-and-jump contest—one always popular with St. Cuthbert boys—was well contested. Although at one time it appeared that Stapleton was likely to distance all comers, fortune was against him. He was defeated by an open admirer of Gregson, to whose side went also the prizes for the long throw and the high jump.

At dinner time, results, so far, did not look very encouraging for our friends. They could only count two victories, while their opponents already counted five. To make matters more critical, by dinner time all the boys of the college fully realized that the competitors were divided into two distinct camps. Hunter and Stapleton now realized more clearly than before that their successes would be a decided moral victory—that if their camp should come out triumphant at the end of the day, their influence would be firmly established for the rest of the year.

Hunter, with the instincts of a manager, gave orders

that notwithstanding the tempting first-class feast at dinner, those who were to take part in the events of the afternoon were to eat sparingly and of solid food only. After dinner they were to rest quietly for at least one hour.

Every one who knew Claude Winters would be well aware that this regulation could not be applied to him. All day long he was like quicksilver, never quiet for a moment. His excitement kept him on the move, whether he had anything to do or not. But had not Claude already done his share by winning one prize?

Stapleton and Hunter were not very much disconcerted with the apparent unfavorable results of the morning's work. These felt certain of Gilkins' two gains with the hammer and the stone or shot. They knew also that the yard attached considerable importance to these two trials of strength. This, they reckoned, would bring the tallying to four to five.

There was to be a senior relay race of three sets of three on a side, but as the Hunter and Gregson elements were mixed indiscriminately in this race it was clear there was no moral influence to be gained or lost by it. Considerable importance was attached to the standing high jump contest; and even more to the two foot races—four hundred and forty yard race, and the other a hundred yard dash. For all these our friends had entered. They had also arranged that Falvey, Winters, and Roy Henning should enter for the half mile wheel race.

Beyond all question the greatest interest of the day was centered on the mile bicycle race. It was to be the great race of the day, the finish and climax of the day's sports.

The committee were agreed that to win that would be worth winning three other races for the purpose for which they were working.

It can easily be understood how anxious they were that Ambrose Bracebridge should be in good form, and that he should keep his head clear and his nerves steady. At all events the outlook, so far, was promising, for Bracebridge was perfectly cool, easily managed, and had rested much during the morning.

By two o'clock the grand stand was well filled by visitors from town. The narrow space around the track was filling up with carriages and other vehicles.

The first event after dinner was the standing high jump. It was lost to our friends, much to their chagrin.

"Six to two," said Winters dolefully to Henning. But in the hundred yard dash fortune turned in their favor. Roy Henning came in first, perhaps as much to his own surprise as to his competitors', for until last summer's vacation he had been considered more or less of a weakling. He ran well and was cheered by all.

The four hundred and forty yard race was also won by a member of the "committee." Fred Nash's long stride stood him in good stead here.

"Cheer up, Claudie," said Hunter, to that mercurial boy. "You see it's six to four now. Better things are coming."

Then came the contests in which Gilkins had promised victory. Stapleton, Hollister, and a big fellow, almost as big as Gilkins himself, named Black, were the four who entered the two contests of throwing the sledge and putting the shot. Black was an admirer of Gregson, so the sides were equally divided.

Having entered these competitions last, Gilkins claimed the right to throw last. Some good work had been done in the sledge throwing already, but when Gilkins took hold of the big sledge he handled it in so masterly a fashion that everybody saw he meant victory.

He wore a sleeveless thin undershirt. It was a fine sight to see the play of his back and chest muscles, and his well-knit arms in action.

With the swing of a giant he sent the heavy sledge high in the air, landing it three and a half feet beyond Black's mark.

The boys simply screamed with delight. The ladies fluttered their handkerchiefs from the grand stand. Gilkins took no notice of all the applause. Turning to Stapleton, who was close by, he said:

"That's one out of the two. Say a Hail Mary for my next success, for I'm terribly anxious to be as good as my word and win both."

The good old chaplain's influence on the big rough boy was beginning to work. He would have laughed a year ago—six months ago—had he heard such a remark, on a sports day, as he himself had just made use of. He was, as Hunter early in the year predicted, getting more and more under the St. Cuthbert's influence.

He was as good as his word. He won the shot putting contest with even more ease than he had the previous trial.

"Six to six! Tie! Whoop-la!" screamed the irrepressible Claude Winters.

"The next event will be the mile relay race in three thirds by three sets," the man at the megaphone informed the occupants of the grand stand.

As this relay race took some time to get ready, we will, while the band is playing, endeavor to describe it for the benefit of those young readers who have never seen one. This is the way the race is run:

Three men comprise one set. One is at the starting point, another is stationed a third of the way along the mile track, while the third man is two-thirds of a mile from the starting point. The man at the line runs a third of a mile to the man waiting for him and whom the runner must touch. The second man then starts at his greatest speed and touches the man at the two-thirds of a mile point. This third man runs home. Thus, although a mile is run in the race, yet each of the three runners covers only one-third of that distance. The judges of this race generally demand that a piece of white silk or a handkerchief shall change hands to prevent the starter moving before the runner has covered his ground. As the track at St. Cuthbert's, at the time, was a quarter mile course, the spectators had a good opportunity of witnessing the race at rather close range, something that cannot be done so conveniently when the track is longer.

Both sets of contestants had entered the relay race, so our friends had no particular interest in the result, beyond witnessing a fine piece of athletics.

Then came the three bicycle races of the day. As they are so important and have so much bearing on our story, we will devote to them a new chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

SOME TRACK EVENTS.

HAD the gentlemen invited to act as judges, starter, and timekeeper, had the choosing of the weather, they could not have selected a better day for an October bicycle meet. All day it had been warm and summer-like. The sky had remained a deep clear blue. During the afternoon the temperature fell somewhat. A fresh breeze sprang up, sufficient to make cheeks look rosy and eyes sparkle. It kept the scarfs and wraps and laces in the grand stand, as well as numberless little blue and white flags all over the field, in constant fluttering motion. The track was in excellent condition. Everybody was eager for the great sport of the day to begin, and regretting that only three senior races were to be witnessed.

It was an animated and beautiful scene when, promptly at the close of the relay race, the wheelmen and their voluntary attendants came upon the ground. The autumn tints of the trees surrounding the field, ablaze with the rich colors of the dying year; the diversified costumes of the lady visitors who occupied the grand stand and the carriages which filled every available site around the track, the numerous flags, all combined to give a festive appearance to the occasion.

The different bright colors of the long blanket coats in which many of the riders were enveloped previous to the start, helped to add gaiety to the scene. Some of these

coats were striped with all colors, some were a bright red, some light blue, and many were pure white. No attempt to discard them was made by any one until immediately before the starting of the race. This was done to prevent the racers' muscles becoming stiff and sore by being chilled before the race began.

All the racers came on the field at one time. The audience cheered loudly, waving flags and handkerchiefs. For a few minutes there was a deluge of noise, accompanied by a rich panorama of changing colors.

The first race was a quarter mile dash of the junior division, but as we are at present more interested in the seniors' races, we ask pardon of the little fellows for not giving a detailed account of their races.

There were four entries in the senior quarter mile run. Claude Winters and Roy Henning represented the Hunters. Grossmith and Alberton were the Gregsonites. The contest was close. The race was well run. For nearly the whole distance the four were well bunched. As the riders turned into the home stretch, the clerk of the course sounded a bell as a signal for the final spurt. Winters and Alberton shot ahead of the others a wheel's length. Neck and neck they rode for half the length of the home stretch. Then Claude saw with chagrin that Alberton was drawing ahead in the last hundred yards.

He put forth all his powers, but his opponent had a greater reserve strength, and used it at the right moment. Claude came in second, less than one foot behind the victor.

"Too bad, Claude!" said Stapleton. "If you had had the sense to follow Manager Hunter's advice, and not run

around all day like a kitten after its tail, you would have won that race."

"I know it," said Winters. He had at the moment such a comically rueful face that all his friends burst out laughing.

"I know it, but to-day I simply could not keep still."

"What's our score now?" asked Clavering, rather anxiously.

"Seven to six against us," replied Claude, sorrowfully. "But never mind, Stapleton is going to win the next, you'll see."

So he did. Stapleton was pitted against four others. It was seen from the first that he was by far the best man. He led with ease. In consequence, this race from the start lacked that interest of excitement as a contest, although it brought the two camps to a tie on the number of victories gained.

There was intense excitement among the boys and also among the occupants of the grand stand when the last and great race of the day was announced through the megaphone.

The bell called the contestants to the judges' stand. Off went every blanket coat and eight strong, healthy, well-formed, handsome boys stood at their wheels. There was a great clapping of hands, cheering, and blowing of, certainly not musical, tin trumpets when the riders appeared in various colored riding shirts and caps. Several of the boys turned to the grand stand and touched their caps. As Ambrose Bracebridge did this, he caught sight of Major and Mrs. Bracebridge and his sister Rose. The party had driven over from Rosecroft Manor to witness the races. As he caught his sister's eye, she clapped her

hands and waved her little blue and white flag in encouragement to her brother and his friends.

"Attention, please," said an official, from the judges' stand. "The judges have drawn lots for positions in the race. They are as follows: Black has the pole, pink, purple, blue, yellow, white, mauve, green."

This meant that Gregson, whose color was black, had the pole; Bracebridge, pink; John Black, purple; Selby, blue; Clavering, yellow; Hollister, white; Hunter, mauve; and Nash, green.

"You will all please go a hundred yards down the home stretch, examine your wheels, and at a signal will mount there. Now, gentlemen, the sun is getting low, so try to pass under the wire in a bunch for a good start at once."

When the examination of the wheels was completed even to the testing of the oscillation, Gregson said:

"Wait, please. Will some one lend me a wrench? My right pedal seems a little loose."

"Where is your own?" asked Selby.

"Confound it, I have lost it and cannot find it anywhere."

A wrench was handed to him by one of the bystanders. In two minutes he was ready.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?—Go."

All got in motion well and reached the wire in good form.

"Go!"

"They are off! They have started! There they go! Hurrah!" A thousand shouts and cheers came from the spectators in the grand stand and around the field. Those who did not shout used their trumpets vociferously. As

if to help along the wheelmen the band started up a lively gallop. Laces fluttered, parasols, handkerchiefs and little flags waved in the breeze. The scene was one of animation and beauty. What a hum of excitement there was, as the large, fashionably dressed gathering watched the bits of flying color!

The track, as has been said, was a quarter of a mile in length. The racers had, therefore, to make four laps.

As soon as the race had started, Claude Winters and Roy Henning crossed the track and wormed their way into the grand stand to where their friends Mr. and Mrs. and Rose Bracebridge were seated.

"Who is that boy with the black cap and black shirt?" asked Rose Bracebridge, after the handshaking.

"That's Gregson," replied Claude. "He is Ambrose's opponent, and we are all afraid of him."

"Oh, I do hope Ambrose will win," said the enthusiastic young lady.

"You do not wish it more than we do, does she, Roy?"

"But he's my brother, you know."

"And he's our—our champion."

"Oh!"

The eight bunched well together for the first half of the first round. All appeared to be saving themselves. Coming down the home stretch all bunched again for a spurt. At the beginning of the next lap the real race began. At the beginning of the second quarter Gregson stretched away, with Bracebridge on his back wheel. Both gradually drew away from the other six. The race was evidently to be between these two.

Suddenly, at one-third of the second quarter, Hunter pulled out from among the stragglers. By a strong spurt

he came close to the two leaders. Bracebridge had gained considerably in the second quarter. As the two leaders came under the wire a second time, Bracebridge was not more than twelve inches behind his rival. Hunter was a wheel's length behind.

A tornado of cheers sent the racers on the third round. In the beginning of this lap, purple and yellow, that is, Clavering and Black, gradually dropped behind and gave up.

Hunter found he had not the staying qualities of the other two, and had to drop back to Nash. Well, mauve and green go well together.

It was now a race between black and pink. No other colors attracted any attention. The third quarter was run neck and neck all around the course. In the first quarter of the third lap Bracebridge was six inches ahead of Gregson. In the second quarter he changed places with his rival. In the third, he changed again, and in coming under the wire at the judges' stand for the commencement of the fourth and last round, it would have been impossible to say which was ahead. Both seemed to have got what is called their second wind, when the lungs have adapted themselves to the work, and the race then relies on skill and muscle. The two well knew that the real work of the race was to be done in the fourth round, which was begun amid a perfect torrent of shouts, screams and trumpet blasts.

Major Bracebridge became so enthusiastic that he could not sit still.

"Wait here, mamma—and you, too, Rose—I must go down on the track to be close when this fine race finishes. Dear me, I did not dream there was such excitement in

bicycle racing! Who would have thought that Ambrose could have raced like this!"

"Come up on the judges' stand, major," said one of the judges of the races.

"No, no, thanks! I'm too interested—too partial to be up there just now. Some other time. Thanks, though!"

"Hurrah, hurrah! Go it, pink! Go it, Bracebridge! Give it to him, Gregson! Down him, Bracebridge! Rahl for Ambrose!"

The grand stand was wild with excitement. The boys, crowded out of the grand stand by the numbers of visitors, lined the track on both sides. It seemed wonderful that these boys could produce such a volume of sound.

The two racers were now pale from excitement and the physical exertion. Their hearts and lungs must be sound to stand so great a strain. There was a look of determination on each face. Bracebridge knew Gregson was a good wheelman, but he did not imagine that he had such good staying qualities as he was now showing.

The half distance was reached. Both began to prepare for the final spurt. They were riding in good form, with handle bars well down and bodies far over the front wheel.

The two had already turned into the rather long home stretch, when Gregson began suddenly to forge ahead. Now was the time for all of Ambrose's reserve powers. He put them forth. He knew that he was within his own strength, but realizing, at the same time, that there was considerable strain on the wheel.

What was the matter? He saw with dismay that Gregson was surely gaining. At that moment he caught sight of his opponent's face. It had a look which Ambrose

never forgot. Gregson's white teeth, as the lips were curled away, appeared to be actually snarling. The face looked horrible. There was a glitter in the eyes which could not result from the triumph of winning.

To Bracebridge's surprise, he now found that when he began to strain his wheel for the last heavy spurt, it did not respond to his efforts. The wheel rattled. It seemed in some way loose. Whether in the gearing, pedals, or spokes, the rider could not tell. Something was wrong. His rival was now a good foot ahead.

Bracebridge put out all the physical strength he possessed as he sped along the home stretch. It was no use. The wheel would no longer properly respond to his touch. Pale and panting, the two rushed beneath the wire. Bracebridge had lost by half a wheel's length.

The shouts and screams of the sightseers increased, but most of the noise came now from a sense of disappointment. The pink rider, from the first, had been the favorite.

As the two passed the judges' stand, Gregson raised his hand, jockey fashion, and shouted:

"I have won—fairly."

Bracebridge slackened at once. Going to the stand he said quietly, but firmly:

"I protest the race, gentlemen."

"What!" said his father. "Don't be foolish, boy. You have lost. Take your defeat like a man. Don't be a—" Baby, he was going to say, but was interrupted by his son. "Father, believe me. Trust me this once. I have reason for doing as I do now."

With perfect self-possession he again turned to the judges. "I protest the race, gentlemen," he repeated.

There was a certain dignity in the boy's manner. Major Bracebridge at once realized that his son was no longer a child. The father saw the young man was old enough to manage his own affairs.

"All right, Ambrose. I trust you, my son. You have never deceived me."

"And never will, sir; you may rely on that."

Just then Gregson returned in time to hear the words from one of the judges.

"Judgment will not be given until to-morrow."

Gregson had not heard Ambrose's protest. At the judge's words he started as if stung. His lips turned ashen gray. Without a word he rode off the field, but not before Mr. Shalford's eyes had looked him through and through.

"Give me your wheel, Bracebridge," said Claude Winters, as some one helped the loser of the race to get into his big woolen coat.

"No, Claude, don't touch it."

He had reason for acting thus, which he explained afterward. Turning to his father, he said:

"Papa, will you excuse me to mother and Rose? I cannot go over to them now. I will ask permission to come home on my wheel next Sunday instead."

Bracebridge, Stapleton, and Winters, trundled their wheels off the grounds, with difficulty threading their way amid the departing concourse of people.

CHAPTER XVI.

SOME DISCOVERIES.

THE greatest excitement prevailed among the boys over the result of the great mile race. Groups of threes and fours were scattered about the yard, all earnestly discussing it. Why had Bracebridge protested? Was it merely because he was vexed at losing a well-contested race? Many thought he was not that kind of a boy. There were some, however, who were inclined to attribute this rather low motive to him, but by far the greater number were convinced that he had some good reason for making the protest. Even some of his friends of the Philosophy class, not understanding him, began to waver and to think that after all they had, perhaps, taken up with the wrong sort of man.

Before leaving, the judges had informed Mr. Shalford that, as far as their knowledge went, they saw no reason why the mile race should not be awarded to Gregson. Everything, so far as they were in a position to judge, had been fair. They thought the contestants had been well matched. Altogether it had been a most enjoyable race. They regretted a protest had been entered.

There was no time left to investigate that evening. As they had publicly announced that their decision would be reserved, they requested the prefect not to say anything about this race until the next day, giving him full liberty, if anything were discovered in the meantime, to take the awarding of the decision into his own hands, promising to ratify any action he might take.

The distribution of the senior prizes took place in the gymnasium after supper, amid much cheering and clapping of hands in honor of the winners. Claude Winters had an opportunity of realizing that he was a popular boy at school, by the ovation he received when he went up to the platform to receive his prize for the pole vaulting.

"And now," said Mr. Shalford, when all was done, "as the result of the mile bicycle race has been objected to, the judges' decision on that event will not be given until to-morrow."

There was an audible hiss from some of Gregson's friends. Mr. Shalford looked annoyed and vexed.

"It's my prize," said Gregson. "I won it fairly, and I'd like to see any one keep me out of it."

"Perhaps you did," said Fred Nash, who was standing in the crowd behind Gregson, who turned fiercely around.

"What do you mean by 'perhaps'? You can't prove I didn't win fairly."

"Perhaps I cannot," said Nash.

"Why, hang it, man! if you have anything against me, out with it. I can clear myself of all you can say."

"Perhaps," again said the enigmatic Nash. He then added in a clear, well-heard undertone, as if talking to himself:

"How terribly anxious this fellow is to clear himself before any one accuses him. It's my belief that if he is given rope enough he'll hang himself."

The chance shot went home. Gregson turned deathly pale, and, as some of the boys who were closest to him said afterward, his lips looked actually blue in the electric light.

Mr. Shalford had overheard these remarks. From be-

neath his thick, bushy eyebrows, he cast on Gregson a most piercing glance, under which the boy seemed to quail.

"Gregson," he said, "please come up here."

The boys around Gregson made way for him to mount the low platform at the end of the room.

"Now, my boy," said the prefect, kindly, "I want you to understand that I have no doubt whatever that you won the race fairly, but why do you so frequently state this fact, and when no one has challenged it? You remember at the very moment of finishing the last lap you said the same thing."

"Well, the decision was challenged."

"Not then."

"But it is now."

"Yes, but no one charges you with unfairness?"

The boy was silent. Telegraphic glances had been passing between Bracebridge and Hunter while this conversation was progressing. When Gregson became silent, Hunter said:

"Now is your time, Ambrose," and pushed him toward the platform.

"I would like to make a statement, sir, if you will allow me," said the boy.

"Certainly, Bracebridge. What is it? Come up here."

"I entered a protest with the judges, sir, because my wheel, on the fourth round, acted in a most strange manner."

"And that was my fault, I suppose," interposed Gregson.

"Wait a minute, please. I don't accuse you or anybody. I merely state that my wheel acted strangely."

"What do you mean by that?" asked the prefect.

"I mean, sir, that it became loose in the spokes, rattled, and appeared as if it were going to pieces— and, of course, lost speed."

"You mean, you played out," said Gregson.

"Wait, please, until I have finished. I said before that I do not accuse you. Well, sir, I went at once and thoroughly examined my machine."

"And found the going to pieces all in your imagination?" said Mr. Shalford.

"No, sir. I found my wheel had—been—tampered—with!"

"A-ah!" came the long, spontaneous sound of excitement from the now thoroughly excited crowd of boys.

"Be quiet, boys. Let us hear the end of this story. I guess your imagination must have been playing you a trick after all, Bracebridge; but go on."

"I went at once to the wheel-room with my wheel. I found, sir, that about one-fourth of the spokes had been loosened, while one-fourth at the opposite side to those loosened appeared to have been tightened, so as to throw the axle out of center."

"Impossible! You couldn't have ridden on such a wheel!"

"But I did, sir. The way I managed to do so seems to be this. The wheel is a high-priced one of splendid workmanship, so everything hung together until the really heavy strain of the last spurt was put upon it. Then the spokes of the loosened part began to work in the holes of the wooden groove which holds the tire. Under ordinary weight and ordinary pedaling, there was not sufficient strain to tell, but, as I said before, when I began

in the last lap to put all my strength into the wheel, the whole machine began to get awry."

"Oh, yes," sneered Gregson, "Bracebridge is a rich man's son and therefore you believe all that he says. I get no credit for what I say."

"Don't talk nonsense," said the prefect sharply.

"Well, then, that fairy story of Bracebridge's to cheat me out of the prize is the evidence of only one man. I say I won fairly. So it's one to one after all. All this which he says was done to his wheel, if it were done, might have been done after the race."

"I thought some one might possibly say that, sir," said Ambrose quietly, "so I took the precaution to have witnesses. Stapleton and Winters examined the wheel with me right after the race. The wheel did not leave my hands until I had thoroughly examined it. But be their testimony what it may, I claim the right to be believed."

"Ho! you do," said Gregson, "why you more than oth—"

"Because I always speak the truth. I am not accustomed to lie—that's why!" answered Ambrose quickly.

The excited listeners cheered this outspoken declaration of his claim for credibility. They saw that it was given with a natural dignity which was devoid of all tinge of priggishness. It was the simple claim of an upright character. Had there been the slightest suspicion among the boys that he was "posing" he could not have retained their confidence for five minutes. Gregson lapsed into silence. Stapleton and Winters confirmed the testimony of the first witness. They had no doubt but that the wheel had been tampered with, because, they said, that in tightening or loosening the nuts which held the spokes, the

wooden groove of the wheel had been very much scratched, and in some places even dinged. The other two opposite fourths of the wheel which had not been touched were free from marks or scratches of any kind.

It was quite evident now to the boys that a very mean trick had been done by some one. Who was the culprit? The difficulties of the case were not lessened when Mr. Shalford said:

"Well, whom do you accuse?"

"No one, sir," answered Ambrose. "I merely state what I have found out, and my reason for entering the protest."

"And I," said Gregson, "knowing nothing of this alleged tampering with his wheel, claim to have won fairly. When I heard he had protested I repeated my claim that I had fairly won the race. That's all there is in it."

"Perhaps," said Fred Nash, from among the audience, in imitation of the "Nevermore" of Poe's Raven.

"Oh, you shut up, Nash," from Gregson. "You are not interested in this thing."

"Perhaps!" Fred again repeated sonorously. His one word was, for some reason, like a lash to Gregson's back. It appeared to the "committee" that every time the claimant for the prize heard it, he winced under it.

"It is a peculiar case," said the prefect. "I cannot do anything until there are more developments. Was there ever anything the matter with your wheel before?"

"Never, sir," said Bracebridge. "I have had it a year. Last summer I made a century with it."

"Well, we must now postpone further investigation," said Mr. Shalford. "But I hope, for the credit of St.

Cuthbert's, it will turn out all right. I am loath to believe that any student here would do a dastardly act. There is a mystery about it. We must wait."

Just at this moment there was a commotion at the other end of the gymnasium, near the door. Claude Winters, in order to see better what was going on, mounted the vaulting horse. Others seated themselves on the horizontal bars, climbing ladders, and other apparatus of the gymnasium.

"Look, look, Frank!" said Winters, who from his elevated position could see over the heads of the boys. "If there isn't Ernie and another boy from the small yard, standing at the door. Go, Frank, and see what they want."

Stapleton pushed his way through the mass of boys to the two little fellows. All eyes were now turned to the two boys who stood rather timidly on the doorstep. Owing to the strict separation between the juniors and seniors, Ernest Winters and his companion had never yet been in the large boys' gymnasium.

"What's up, Ernie?" asked Stapleton. "Why do you come over here? Mr. Silvertown will catch you."

"We've got a letter for Mr. Shalford," said Ernest.

"You have? Then come along. These fellows won't hurt or eat you."

Frank conducted them through the crowd of boys to the platform.

"What's the matter, Ernest? Have you been getting into trouble?"

Claude was all excitement now. Jumping from the vaulting horse he went over to his brother, who answered:

"No, but Mr. Silvertown sent us over 'cause we know

something. He told us to tell it to Mr. Shalford. He gave me this letter for him."

The letter was a penciled, folded note, and ran thus :

"These little fellows seem to know something about that race, so I send them to you. You may trust implicitly all they say. S."

"Well, Ernest, what have you to say? Do not be afraid to speak out."

"I'm not afraid, sir," he replied. Nevertheless he held Claude's hand tightly, as if for protection, as he faced the sea of faces, all eager to hear his story.

"Last night, sir," began the boy who had once been so nearly kidnapped, "I was looking out of the stair window in our building across the yard at the bicycle shed."

"At what time?" asked the prefect.

"It was about twenty minutes before the end of studies of the last hour."

"But, my boy, how is it that you were on the stairs at that time and not in your study-hall?"

"The study-keeper gave me leave to go down to the play-room to feed my rabbits. I forgot to do that at recess."

"Go on."

"I saw a big boy come to the wheel-room shed, and stand on a box and lift out the little window in the back wall. Then he got up on the sill and wriggled himself through the window-hole, and he got inside."

"Well, is that all?"

"I thought it was awful funny for a boy to get in that way, so I ran downstairs again and went out into the yard to see who it was when he came out, but when he put his head out of the window, I got frightened, so I hid myself

behind the big tree near the bicycle-room for fear he would catch me."

"How long was he inside?"

"About a quarter of an hour, I think, sir, because when I went back to the study-hall Mr. Benson said I had been gone nearly half an hour, and threatened to put me in 'jug' for half an hour the next day. He didn't though, 'cause we had a holiday all day to-day."

"Did you see the face of the boy as he came out?"

"Yes, sir, quite clear in the moonlight."

"Would you know it if you saw it again?"

"Yes, sir, I'm sure I should."

"Now, my boy, don't mention any names, but take a good look at all these boys and if that boy is here, point out the face to me."

CHAPTER XVII.

IDENTIFIED.

It was a thrilling moment for the boys when little Ernest Winters began his searching glance over the throng of upturned faces. He began at the right side, and his outstretched arm followed his eyes as he slowly glanced from face to face of the closely packed throng of boys. Slowly his hand moved from right to left, for there were nearly two hundred boys massed together in the small area. At length the arm had moved to the extreme left. It then suddenly dropped.

There was now breathless silence.

"I—I don't see the face, sir."

"You are sure that it is not one of these boys before you whom you saw last night?"

"Sure, sir, quite."

"Humph! I'm glad it wasn't a student! But this does not clear up matters much. However, if that is all, you may sit down."

Ernest Winters turned to take a seat on a bench near the wall in the rear of the stage. Suddenly he gave a scream.

"There's the face! That's him! That's him!"

He pointed to Gregson.

"Little fool!" muttered that worthy between his teeth. He scowled fearfully.

"It's a lie," he said aloud.

"'Tain't neither," retorted Ernest. "I saw you and you know you was there."

Ernest had not seen Gregson before, because, either by accident or design, his face had been hidden behind the broad shoulders of a big boy standing in front of him.

"That will do, Winters," said the prefect. "Keep quiet now. That's all, eh? All right. Sit down now and keep still."

"Now, my little lad," he said to the other boy, "what have you to say? What's your name?"

"John Asa Bell, sir."

"All right. Ring out your story. Did you see a boy get through the rear window of the bicycle-room last night?"

"No, sir, but at last recess just before our night prayers I was looking out of the study room window toward the shed. I saw something on the ground shining very bright in the moonlight. I thought it was a silver dollar, so I

ran downstairs in a hurry and went over to where it was, 'cause I don't often get a whole dollar and I've got to pay for a window I broke yesterday."

"Where did you see this shining thing, Bell?"

"Right under the little square window of the bicycle shed, sir, about a foot from the wall."

"Was it a dollar?"

"No, sir," said the little boy, so ruefully that everybody laughed.

"What was it, then?"

"When I got over there to where I had seen the dollar shining it didn't shine any more, so I kicked 'round with my foot and this what I've got in my pocket was it."

"Take it out and let us see what it is."

The boys crowded closer to get a glimpse of the mysterious object.

Now, John Asa Bell's pockets were very similar to every other small boy's pockets under the sun—receptacles for everything—miniature junk-shops. These particular pockets were situated in a pair of almost skin-tight knee pants, and although both were—a not unusual thing, dear reader—in a more or less bulging condition, yet the pocket mouth was very small and with great difficulty admitted or released a hand when placed therein.

His right hand wormed itself in, and John Asa Bell drew out a top with the greatest difficulty.

"That's what you saw shining in the moonlight, eh?"

"No, sir, it's down in the bottom of my pocket."

"Oh, all right. We have unlimited time and patience, John Asa Bell, nevertheless do not waste them."

The boys watched him with increasing interest. Again the hand went into the cavern and once more squirmed

out. This time it held a top string, some buckles, and bits of slate pencil. These he put with the top in the left hand and began again. If John Asa Bell had studied for years to produce a dramatic situation capable of holding an audience in excited suspense, he could not have been more successful than he was now in his artless exhibition of small-boyness. Utterly unconscious of the nervous tension he was creating among those who were watching him, once more his hand dived down into this modern substitute for the mythical Pandora's box.

When the boy's hand again emerged with difficulty from the mysterious pocket it was filled with a miscellaneous collection consisting of two more buckles, a pocket knife with two broken blades—evidently his stock in trade for his "unsight-unseen" transactions—some marbles, a small iron nut, with more string.

Passing these treasures over to his left hand, which he held against his chest, he found there was more than it could hold. He began to drop some of the marbles, to his great consternation. His story of the denouement of a deep laid plot was nothing to him. His marbles were. Seeing his plight, Stapleton picked up the fallen treasures. Putting them into his hat he said:

"Here, sonny, dump those things here. I'll pick these up and take care of all of them for you."

Once more the hand went into the pocket. Something was there which seemed too elusive to be brought to the light of day.

Standing on his left leg, John Asa Bell drew up his right knee, bent his body to the right and made great efforts to give the pocket's mouth more play.

Would he never bring his treasure to the light! The

boys watched his every movement. Only their own intense excitement prevented them from realizing how long a time this youngster, who was perfectly devoid of any self-consciousness, was keeping them in suspense.

At last! At last his efforts were successful. From the skin-tight knee pants' pocket he drew forth—a nickel-plated bicycle wrench.

If the situation had been dramatic before, it now became doubly so. A new wave of excitement swept over the boys. They became silent, feverishly awaiting further developments.

"You found this wrench in the rear of the bicycle-shed?"

"Yes, sir."

"How close?"

"Right under the window."

"Last night?"

"Yes, sir, just before night prayers."

"Let me see it."

While the prefect was examining it, Claude said:

"That's the reason Gregson borrowed one on the track just before the race."

"Wait, there, Winters. Don't be unjust. You have no evidence that this belongs to Gregson."

"He had not his to-day, sir."

"But it does not follow that this one is his."

"I can identify Gregson's wrench," said a boy named Withers.

Hiding the wrench from the boy's sight the prefect told him to describe it. Withers described the wrench of a certain bicycle firm, and added:

"Gregson's wrench, which I saw yesterday morning in his hand has the letters J and G scratched with a knife on

the long flat side; then there's a long scratch from the G to the head of the wrench."

The make and marks tallied with the description. And Gregson! He had been sitting on the bench near the wall while the witnesses had been telling their story. Now he rose. He was pale. Great drops of perspiration were on his forehead. He came forward.

"Now, Gregson, we are willing to hear all you have to say," said the prefect kindly, for he heartily pitied the boy.

"I guess there's nothing for me to say."

"You make no defense?"

"No."

"Did you, then, tamper with Bracebridge's wheel?"

There was the intensest silence. Every ear was strained to catch the reply. In a muffled, dry voice came the one audible word from the boy, who then stood self-convicted and humiliated.

"—did—"

The revulsion of feeling was intense, in proportion to the sustained excitement. A long "Ah-h!" went through the crowd like an electric shock. Then complete silence; all waiting for the next development. It was a critical moment for Gregson. The prefect saw the electric condition of the mental atmosphere of the boys. He whispered to Gregson:

"You had better get out of this room as quickly as you can."

The boy stepped down from the platform and began to push his way through the crowd. He had not gone far before the natural dislike of meanness inherent in manly boys found vent in a prolonged contemptuous hiss. Groans would have been less hard to bear. There is

nothing so cutting, or unequivocally humiliating, as hissing as an expression of contempt.

Stapleton, after returning John Asa Bell his treasures, and asking the puzzled little boy for a certificate of safe delivery, turned with Winters to congratulate Ambrose Bracebridge. He could not be found in the gymnasium.

As soon as the unsuccessful wheelman had stated his case, he had retired from the gymnasium. He went to the Philosophy class-room, where a few of his friends were now discussing the situation with him. Frank, Claude, and the rest of the Hunterites rushed to the class-room to tell Ambrose Bracebridge of Gregson's admission.

The next morning John Philip Watkins Gray came up to the prefect.

"I guess, sir, that Gregson must have slept in the infirmary last night. His bed, which is next to mine in the dormitory, was not occupied."

"I know that, my boy, very well. But I don't think you will find him in the infirmary. I have just found out that what I expected would happen, did happen. The boy ran away."

"Ran away!"

"Yes. Don't excite yourself, Gray. I expected this, and took small pains to prevent it. It saves an expulsion to-day. We do not desire such boys at St. Cuthbert's."

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN CLASS.

It must not be supposed that life at St. Cuthbert's consisted wholly of field-days and sports and games, to the exclusion of hard work in the class-rooms and in the study-halls. Much real and solid work was done every day. This is only what might have been expected from conscientious Catholic boys and from enthusiastic professors whose whole energies were given to a work to which they had devoted their lives.

Now I do not want to frighten my young readers by giving them a whole chapter descriptive of class-work at St. Cuthbert's. I think I know boys well enough to be sure that if I were to attempt such a thing most readers would turn over the leaves of this book to the next chapter. This, of course, would be a matter of regret, because as this is a veritable history of St. Cuthbert's, they would miss some items which would perhaps be worth their reading. It is certainly within the sphere of this chronicle to relate some of the events which happened in the classroom and during class-time, as it is to tell of those which took place out of study-time.

Now in doing this, one is not forbidden to select the humorous side of the hard work of schoolboy life. Some one may laugh at the expression "hard work of schoolboy life." That study—real, earnest study—is hard work no man who has ever been a boy will deny. There are some men who have never been boys. These will, most likely, deny there is work at school. We will not discuss this

question. If, however, any of these sceptics had ever asked the opinion of St. Cuthbert's students, they would have heard some very positive statements.

From conversation in the yard on the day after the great fall field-day, a number of the Third Academic boys evidently thought so. We will not record their conversation on the abstract question of the absolute necessity of hard work after a field-day, etc., etc., but we will relate a few of the events which gave rise to it, and let the reader see the point if he can.

Of course so great an event as we have described in the last few chapters, did not help to make the little men of the Third Academic over-anxious to get down to strict business on the next day. It was a kind of Blue Friday. Every one was tired. No one knew his lessons well, many not at all.

It is on just such a day that boys think their teacher "great" if he can make them realize that "he knows how it is"—a day in which a teacher rises to the highest pinnacle of popularity in the estimation of his class, if he is not too exacting as to lessons, and happens to have found somewhere a first-class story which is interesting and, at the same time, instructive.

But Mr. Benson did not chance to be one of those men who happen to discover things just at the time when the discovery is the most valuable. He was earnest, zealous, devoted, but many a boy knew to his cost that he was unrelentingly rigid. If he penanced a boy with twenty lines to learn, the victim knew with infallible certainty that he would have to pronounce every word and syllable of those lines. If he had a hundred lines to write, the boy knew that the eagle eye of Mr. Benson could detect, as if

by instinct, the words left out in a sentence or even the mistakes in spelling.

It must not be supposed, however, that his boys did not like him. They did, but it was a liking of respect rather than of love. They held him in high esteem, but regarded him as an exacting taskmaster.

Perhaps I should say they had something even more than esteem for him. They had learned, in some way or other, that when little Jamie Wilson lay sick of pneumonia in the infirmary, Mr. Benson had spent hours night after night with the little lad's hand in his, tending him as patiently as a mother. They found out—how is it that boys always find out such things?—that when McNamara was laid up with a badly sprained shoulder and a wrenched ankle, it was Mr. Benson who brought the fevered boy those delicious oranges, lent him books to read, and interceded with the infirmarian to obtain permission for two boys at a time of Mac's own class to visit him during the night studies.

So, in solemn conclave held on the brick court of the hand-ball alley, they had voted that "he wasn't such a bad fellow," which, after all, as a boy's spontaneous verdict, is something.

Well, on this particular morning, class work was particularly hard work—for these particular boys. Mr. Benson also, on this occasion, received several impressions from his pupils which more or less enlarged his views on educating.

Christian Silbering and little Jimmy Foley were sitting together at one desk in the rear of the room, supposed to be studying their Latin grammar. Foley was very anxious to learn some German words from Silbering, probably

because it was the time appointed for learning Latin words. Silbering, who knew very little English, was equally anxious to learn the meaning in English of the German words of a book lying open on the desk between their two Latin grammars.

"You can't tell me the meaning of this word," said Jimmie, pointing to a German word.

"I doo too," said Christian, and he told it.

"And this one?"

"I knows likewise that, also," replied the other.

"Well, you can't tell me in English the meaning of this word—Gänderich?"

"I doo also," responded Silbering.

"What is it, then?"

"Just led me think. That is a he-goose, ain't it?"

This was too much for James Foley. He burst out into a ringing laugh, and then suddenly remembering the enormity of such an offense in Mr. Benson's eyes, he buried his red cheeks in his hands, and all at once was apparently the hardest-working boy in the class.

"S-s-h! There is too much noise back there. Some of you will get some lines to learn if you are not more careful."

The last four boys having stumbled through their recitation he sent them to their seats.

"Now, boys," he said, "I want to talk to you about the Holy Souls in Purgatory. You know that on Sunday begins the month of November, which is dedicated to the memory of the Holy Souls. You know if you want to help them effectually you must yourselves be in a state of grace. This, as you know, can be obtained in the confessional in the Sacrament of Penance, or by a perfect Act

of Contrition. Now, I have procured for you some little leaflets, on which is printed an Act of Contrition. It is not long, so I will give you ten minutes to learn it, and shall expect each one of you to be able to repeat it."

He then distributed the leaflets. The little boys went to work with a will. Anything to get out of the Latin for a time.

"Have we to learn all that is on the paper?" asked Jimmie Foley.

"Yes, learn it all. There is not much to learn."

In a little time Christian Silbering put up his hand and snapped his fingers loudly.

"Well, Silbering, what is it?"

"I can say it, sir."

"All right, proceed."

Christian began: "An Act of Contrition. O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee by sin, because Thou art infinitely good and sin displeases Thee. I will confess my sins, and by the help of Thy grace will not sin again. Our Father. Hail Mary. Benziger Brothers, New York, Chicago, Cincinnati."

"Leave Benziger Brothers out. What have they to do with the Act of Contrition?" asked Mr. Benson.

"But they are on the paper, and you said I was to learn all that was the paper on."

"Dear me, dear me, how very stupid! I am afraid many of you boys do not go about your studies in the right way," said the teacher.

"If you want to be successful," he continued, "in your lessons, as in everything else, you must be more in earnest, and do a thing again and again until you do it perfectly. Let us take an example. If a boy wishes to be a

successful baseball player, he does not become so by playing one game, does he? No. He does the same thing over and over again until he is perfect in it. Take another example. If you wanted to make a great jump in a contest, what would you do? What would you do, Johnny Smith? You would keep jumping until you were perfect, wouldn't you? And again, suppose one of you boys wanted to smoke a cigarette?"

Every boy in the class tried to look absolutely innocent. Not many succeeded.

"What would you do? You would use every means, try every plan, until you succeeded in getting the cigarette, wouldn't you?"

Every boy agreed with him, but no one dared to openly acquiesce.

"Take one more example of the necessity of striving to reach the object desired, and apply it to your studies. Suppose a boy wanted a drink of water from the pump. What would he do? He would take the means to procure the drink, wouldn't he? He would go to the pump, wouldn't he? He would fill a cup, and then—then what would he do?"

There was, at this point, more or less snapping of fingers, indications of eagerness to answer.

"Well, Christian Silbering, what would that boy do with the cup of water?"

"Offer it oop for the souls in burgatory," said the boy innocently, remembering a previous instruction on little acts of self-denial, and perfectly unconscious that he had completely spoiled the point of a laborious instruction.

The boy seemed quite in earnest. After a stupefied pause, Mr. Benson continued to talk about the gaining of

indulgences for the Holy Souls during the month of November.

"Now who can tell me what an indulgence is?" asked the teacher.

The boys knew in a general way, but no one would risk a definition.

"Well, let us see what it is not," said Mr. Benson. "It is not a permission to commit sin. It is not pardon for sin. What is it, then?"

Now the teacher thought that perhaps this negative knowledge, if made more concrete in connection with these negations would help materially, so he said:

"It is not a permission to commit sin. It is not a shovel; it is not a spade; it is not a hoe. Then what is it?"

He then gave a definition. "An indulgence is a remission of the temporal punishment due to sin after the guilt has been forgiven. Is this clear, boys?"

"Yes, sir, yes, sir," they all answered.

"Very well. I have now told you what an indulgence is. Perhaps now, Silbering, since you did so brilliantly with the Act of Contrition, you can tell the class what an indulgence is."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, tell the class what an indulgence is."

The boy answered promptly:

"It is not a shovel; it is not a spade; it is not a hoe. Then what is it?"

Mr. Benson gave up. For the next half hour of class he made the boys study Latin verbs.

On the same day, neither did Mr. Shalford escape without a somewhat peculiar experience. During the hour of recreation after supper, before the first hour of evening

studies, as he was walking up and down the yard, he passed the infirmary door. From within came a most delicious odor of fresh coffee.

"Ah!" he said to himself. "The good old infirmarian is getting a fine supper for some sick boy. Lucky fellow! By the way, I wonder who is sick? I was not aware that any boy was down just at present. It's some boy from the junior division, I suppose, but there's no harm in going to see."

He stepped into the infirmary. Looking into the convalescents' room as he passed, he found it was empty. Then he went to the dormitory. There was not an occupant of any one of the snow-white beds. Finally he examined the private rooms, reserved for more serious cases of sickness. He could not find the patient, nor could he catch sight of the infirmarian.

Meanwhile the appetizing odor of Mocha permeated every nook and corner of the building. He went downstairs again, and into the dispensary room and then into the infirmary kitchen. Nowhere was the infirmarian to be found.

But what he did see in the kitchen was a boy comfortably seated at a little table, enjoying a hearty second supper of richly browned, buttered toast, and coffee made at the infirmary stove.

"Ho, Clavering! You here?"

"Yes, sir," said our friend. In spite of his attempted coolness he appeared a little bit uneasy.

"What are you doing?"

"Having an extra supper, sir."

"So I see. Father Lovelace must be very good to you?"

"I haven't seen him, sir."

"Did the President send you here, then?"

"No, sir. I didn't see him either."

"Ah! I see," said Mr. Shalford, laughing, "you have been coaxing the good-natured old infirmarian. Oh, you boys."

"No, sir. Not that either."

"So! Well, the college doctor didn't order this kind of prescription, did he?" and he pointed to the remaining fragments of buttered toast.

"No, sir."

"But surely you are not sick, Clavering? You did not appear so at the feasts yesterday."

"No, sir, I'm not in the least sick."

"Who, then, gave you permission for this extra supper?"

"No one, sir."

"No one! Then why are you here?"

"I'll be honest with you, sir," and the boy looked the prefect in the face in a manly sort of way which highly pleased the latter, who realized that the boy was caught, but was not exactly prepared for the confession which followed.

"I'll be honest with you, sir. I was terribly hungry. We have supper very early, you know; and I just wanted some toast and coffee, and I wanted it in the worst kind of way. So I weighed the matter and decided to take the risk. The supper was worth the penance—if I should get nabbed. I was caught, as you see, sir, and now I'm ready to do any kind of penance you impose."

Mr. Shalford was amused. For some seconds he silently looked at the clear-eyed, handsome boy before him.

In that time he had made up his mind how to act. Had the admission of the peccadillo been accompanied by any kind of self-excuse, or petition for leniency; had there been any sign of smallness or meanness, it is quite possible that Master Richard Clavering would have experienced an extremely unpleasant quarter of an hour. Nothing of this kind was apparent. Mr. Shalford realized that objectively two boys could commit the same fault, and, subjectively, for one it would be a great wrong, while for the other it could be a mere trifle. The latter, he saw, was Clavering's case. What was he to do under the circumstances? He said:

"Well, if you are not possessed of the most illimitable quantity of—"

"Cheek, sir? I can only admit it. But, as I told you, I took my chances. The penance—"

"—is, that if you don't get out of this room this instant I will—there, I don't know what I'll do. But seriously, Dick, don't let me catch you at such a trick again."

"I don't think you will, sir. Thank you, Mr. Shalford."

It was weakness, of course—we must grant something to the rigorists—on Mr. Shalford's part not to have punished for such a breach of discipline. It was weakness again, of course, in that instead of seeing the boy out of the infirmary ahead of himself, he went out alone. The prefect had noticed that there was some toast and half a cup of that delicious coffee yet unconsumed and—well the prefect was once a boy himself.

CHAPTER XIX.

A FATHER'S FEARS.

THE father of Claude Winters had continued to be very anxious concerning his son's safety. His mind was ill at ease. Although he tried to reassure himself that under the protection of the United States laws nothing could happen, yet the thought that Ernest was very nearly being kidnapped did not tend to allay his fears. His anxiety was increased when he saw the influence Ernest's experience was having upon his wife.

Claude's letter had been the occasion of recalling to her memory all the horror and dread of that unhappy time in India. The revival in her memory of those scenes of anxiety and danger was influencing her health.

Nor was Mr. Winters in a frame of mind to be of much assistance toward repelling the morbid fancies of his wife. When he had seen Claude at the hotel at Cuthberton he told his son not to let this mystery influence him. He had spoken bravely to his boy—far more bravely than he himself had felt on the matter. The uncertainty, the mere possibility, of some impalpable danger hovering over the heads of the members of his family was far worse for his peace of mind than a real, tangible danger would have been. This he could fight manfully with a chance of downing it. That—the dread of some unknown, uncertain trouble which might come at any moment—was far worse than its actual approach.

Such was the state of mind of Mr. Winters, that he was willing and eager, for his wife's sake, as well as for his

own, to do almost anything within reason to remove the dread of impending evil.

The destruction of the Hindu temple on his father's Indian estate was not his own doing, yet the whole family had incurred the hatred of the Hindus of the locality. But all this took place twenty years ago. For many years he had heard nothing of the affair. Long ago he had hoped and thought the enmity of the natives had died out, especially as most of the older tribesmen had died by this time. This hope seemed now to be futile. All his slumbering fears had been rudely reawakened upon the receipt of Claude's account of his brother's strange adventure.

Mr. Winters wrote to a friend, an army officer at Simla, begging him to tell him what the state of affairs was in and around his Indian property. He received a somewhat reassuring reply. The letter stated that the anger against the Winters family seemed to be dying out. The question of revenge was sinking into oblivion. The writer suggested that if Mr. Winters could accomplish some "coup" in favor of the natives the enmity and stupid prejudice would certainly be completely overcome.

With this somewhat cheering news Mr. Winters went to New York to consult his lawyer as to the best method of bringing about so desirable an end. He told his legal adviser he was willing to go to considerable expense, providing he could regain for himself and his wife that peace of mind which the assured safety of his dearly loved children alone could procure.

"I think I see a way out of the difficulty," said the lawyer. "Could you not do some public benevolent act by which you could win the good will of these tribesmen?"

"I would willingly do so, if I knew what could be done."

The lawyer thought for some minutes in silence.

"You say that the Sisters of Mercy, according to the letter from your friend in Simla, have recently settled among the Hindus close to, if not on, your estate. How are they being received by the natives?"

"The letter states they are much respected and doing much good. The Hindus realize that they are working for their good. They trust to them many of their children to educate."

"Well, sir, then I think I see a way to settle your troubles, if, as you say, you are willing to be generous."

"Money is no object, but you must not ask me to rebuild the Hindu temple which my father destroyed. I could not and would not do that."

"I would not suggest such a course. What I propose is this. You say there are two fine mansions on your estate formerly occupied by your father and by yourself?"

"Yes."

"Could you not give the Sisters one of these houses for a school, hospital, and dispensary for the benefit of the native Hindus?"

"Yes, yes, that's a capital plan!" said Mr. Winters, enthusiastically. "I am very glad I consulted you. But I could not give my father's house because that has been used for years as a kind of vacation villa for the officers of the Simla garrison. The one that is built for me is nearly as large. It would answer the purpose equally well."

"To make your plan effective," said the lawyer, "I would, if I were you, liberally endow the school and hospital, so that the Sisters need not be cramped in their work. Owing to the end which you wish to attain I

should, in this instance, act contrary to the scriptural injunction and let your left hand know what your right hand doeth. I would spread the news far and wide throughout the district; open the hospital with great éclat; get many people to go out from Simla for the occasion, and above all, let everybody know that it is all for the special benefit of the local Hindu population."

"I acquiesce in all you suggest, but this would necessitate a trip to India."

"I recommend you, most decidedly, to go. Take your wife and your boys and girls."

"But this could not be done, at least conveniently, until after Claude's graduation at the end of next June."

"That will probably be time enough for your visit. Many things will have to be attended to before that—deeds to be examined, transfers to be made and the whole matter is to become the talk of the countryside. All this must be done before you arrive. One thing you can do immediately. You can write to the good Sisters there. Give these devoted women the consolation of knowing what is going to be done. Do you think your wife could undertake the journey?"

"I think so. I will consult her. I believe, in her present state of uneasiness anything would be better than inaction. At all events the ocean voyage would be beneficial."

At his hotel, that afternoon, Mr. Winters wrote to his friend in Simla, unfolding to him the whole plan, asking him to tell the Sisters at once. Since his consultation he had been in better spirits than for a long time. It is true that the dread of some misfortune happening in the intervening time was a source of anxiety, yet he was much

encouraged at the prospect of a final settlement of an inherited feud.

After dinner he went to the hotel office to smoke a cigar. The place was filled with professional and business men. Amid the deadened patter of many feet on the tiles and the busy hum of many voices, he could easily distinguish that a large percentage were talking of the remarkable feats performed by some juggler who had night after night filled one of the largest theaters in the city.

Mr. Winters took a seat facing the big plate-glass street window, with the intention of running through the first edition of the afternoon papers. While thus engaged, he could not help overhearing the conversation of two or three men who were standing close behind his chair.

"When do you sail?" asked one person.

"On the tenth of November. I have some pretty good orders this trip. Let me see, fourteen elephants, two lions, three lionesses, one large boa-constrictor, three camels and a dromedary. That's all the big game. I have several orders for mandrills, hyenas, sloths, but these are easy to get."

"By the way, Jenkinson, while you are in India," said the first speaker, "I wish you would ship me a couple of dozen or so of small black idols. The uglier they are, the better. These things seem to be the fad just now. There's money in them."

Jenkinson laughed.

"These are easy enough to get. I could send you the original god of any temple in India if you would be willing to pay enough."

"Well, good-by, Jenkinson."

"Good-by, sir; but before we part I would like to tell

you that this is probably the last trip I shall make for the syndicate. I am tired of traveling over the earth. My wife wants me to settle down. As my children are growing up, I think I shall take her advice."

"I am sorry to hear you are going to quit, Jenkinson, very sorry. I hope you will recommend your successor before you leave us. You have been a faithful agent of our company and we shall regret to lose you. Your securing Chudwalla was an excellent piece of work for the syndicate. Good-by, good-by."

Mr. Peter Jenkinson received a much warmer hand-shaking than corporation managers usually give their employees.

"Well, I swan!" said the buyer of animals, when his employer had gone. "Well, I swan! The old gentleman seemed quite worked up. My! how little we know of hearts and feelings. Who on earth would believe he ever thought anything of me! At the end I do believe the old gentleman was actually too full for utterance."

Mr. Jenkinson took a seat next to Mr. Winters. With that ease with which acquaintances are formed in hotels, on trains, or steamboats, the syndicate agent and the father of Claude were soon engaged in conversation.

"Excuse me, but I think I overheard you say you have been or are going to India? You and your friend behind my chair spoke quite loudly. I could not help overhearing you."

"Yes, sir, been there nearly a dozen times. Been in India?"

"I lived in northern India many years," answered Mr. Winters.

"Glad to meet you, glad to meet you."

"Thanks. Who is this Chudwalla, the great juggler, whom every one is talking about just now? The name sounds like an Indian one."

"Haven't you seen him? No? He is a great fakir—best conjurer that ever came to the United States. I picked him up near Simla. He's wonderful. His name's on every billboard in the city. Making heaps of money, too."

Mr. Winters became nervous. What if this magician should be in this country, not for the purpose of exhibiting his feats of legerdemain, but as one sent by the tribe to hunt down his son! Nor was he reassured when, upon asking how the man spent his time off the stage, he received the following information:

"The man is certainly above the ordinary Hindu. He is well educated—speaks several languages. He has one peculiarity which he won't give up, although by not doing so he loses a good deal of money each month."

"May I ask what that is?"

"He will not perform for any full month. He takes one week to himself out of every four. No persuasion will make him relinquish his search."

"His search! Good gracious, what is he searching for?"

Mr. Winters was very much startled. Here was an Indian from the neighborhood of his birthplace, devoting a week each month to searching for something. Surely he must be looking for his boy. What else, under the circumstances, could he want?

"He is searching for a great diamond," said Mr. Peter Jenkinson, who had not noticed the other's excitement, being, just at that moment, intent on not burning his fingers in the operation of lighting his cheroot.

"It appears to me somewhat of a wild-geese chase. This particular diamond seems to have belonged to some temple. It is said to be a very yellow stone. It was called the Eyesight of Brahma or something of the kind. The temple I speak of was a one-horse affair situated on the hillside at Chour—"

"At Chour!"

"Yes, have you been there?"

"Oh, yes. I have seen that diamond. It was twenty years ago, though."

"So! The old man who is the head of the tribe there—and a mighty good conjurer he is, too—has set his heart on getting back that diamond, and this Chudwalla has promised to help him to find it. I think their chances are pretty slim, don't you? It was too long ago."

"I remember hearing something about the pillage of that temple. Yes, his chances are very slim, very slim indeed, I should say."

"Going to see Chudwalla's performance?"

"I think I shall, either to-night or to-morrow night."

"I would recommend you to do so. Shall I meet you in India six months from now? You know this world is a very small place, after all."

"There are many more unlikely things than that we may meet again."

Jenkinson got up to go.

"Oh! by the way—your name, sir?"

"Excuse me. For reasons of my own, Mr. Jenkinson, I do not want my name to be known. Not that I mistrust you, sir, but owing to very peculiar circumstances I prefer not to give my name at present. However, I hope we shall meet again."

That is just where Mr. Winters made a mistake. Jenkinson was peculiar, but he was a whole-souled American. Had he been made a confidant, he would have strained every nerve to help Mr. Winters out of his difficulties.

They shook hands and parted.

CHAPTER XX.

WAS IT A COINCIDENCE?

VERY much agitated, Mr. Winters went to his room in the hotel to think over what he had heard. This story of seeking for a diamond lost over twenty years ago was, to him, only a veil to cover some other design. What if the other design related to himself and his family! Was it not too bad that just when the whole miserable affair was on the point of being settled forever, the greatest danger should arise!

He reasonably thought that no really sensible man would go searching for a plain diamond, lost twenty years before in India, in a country of so great an extent as the United States. This would be the supremest folly. No. There must be some other motive for Chudwalla's presence. What did Mr. Jenkinson mean by calling the diamond stolen from the temple at Chour the Eyesight of Brahma? Ah! he remembered now! Before leaving London to settle in the United States he had purchased a rather fine diamond of a yellowish tinge as a Christmas present for his wife. He remembered that the diamond merchant in the Strand told him that the precious stone

had a peculiar history. At the time he did not pay much attention to the story, thinking it was merely an effort on the part of the seller to more easily dispose of his wares. He had not purchased the jewel for its supposed history, but for its peculiar color, or rather colors. At certain angles it emitted a blue-white radiance, while at another angle it shone with an almost yellow light. This was the reason of his purchase. He wished now that he could remember the story the jeweler had told him.

For a long time that afternoon the father of Claude strove to recall the name the merchant had given the diamond. At last it came back to him. He called it the Eye of Brahma! That was it! But now that he remembered the name he asked himself of what use would it be to him. The result of his reflection was the certainty that he was the possessor of the diamond which had been stolen from the temple at Chour.

Would not this fact, however, be only an extra danger to him and to his family?

Suddenly a thought came to him almost as an inspiration. It made his blood tingle. It gave him great courage. Immediately the whole question brightened. He would work one event against the other. The diamond for Claude's safety.

Chudwalla's primary search was evidently for the diamond. To him the capture of Claude must be of only secondary importance. At least from Mr. Jenkinson's words he knew that the search for the diamond was a certain quest, while, after all, the conjurer's wish to capture his son might be a creation of his own imagination, without any existence whatever in the mind of the Hindu. If he should subsequently discover that Chudwalla was look-

ing for his boy, he would hold out to him the sure prospect of recovering the Eye of Brahma. What interest could the magician have in seizing the boy? There must be a rich reward for the recovery of the diamond. Yes, Chudwalla would certainly prefer the money to revenge.

Do what he would, however, he could not divert himself of the idea that Claude was, and would be for the next six months, in more danger than ever before. If Chudwalla had a commission from the Hindus on and around his estate in India to find out and capture the colonel's grandson, the same people who had engaged him for this purpose would also, by some means or other, keep him informed of the progress of events in India. He would, therefore, soon learn of the proposed benefactions of the Winters' family to the natives, who would probably be less earnest in their quest for the boy.

On the other hand, Chudwalla—if he were their agent—would be proportionately active while he had the opportunity to accomplish his work, so as not to lose the reward which must follow from its successful accomplishment.

Mr. Winters, when he had visited Claude at Cuthberton, had told him that he must not be surprised if at any time and at a moment's notice, he should withdraw him from St. Cuthbert's, sending him, for the time being, to some distant and out-of-the-way place. He had mentioned Muskoka, and a farm owned by a friend of his outside of Portland, Oregon.

He wrote that afternoon to the President of St. Cuthbert's, giving him a full account of all he had learned. He told him he thought it the best plan to withdraw the two boys. The President answered at once. He said

he would willingly comply with Mr. Winters' request if absolutely necessary, but asked for a personal interview before action was taken. Mr. Winters wired an answer that he would visit St. Cuthbert's once more. So Claude's withdrawal stood in abeyance.

The perplexed father determined to get sight of Chudwalla, if possible, without being seen by him. That evening he bought an ordinary ticket of admission to the theater. In spite of his anxiety he thoroughly enjoyed the exhibition of wonderful skill of the clever Hindu. Some of these performances we have described in an earlier chapter.

After what Mr. Jenkinson had told him of Chudwalla, it was not difficult for Mr. Winters to recognize the magician. He had also seen him more than once in India at Simla and other places when he first began to give public performances.

The number of the seat of Mr. Winters' ticket was directly in the middle of the auditorium and at the end of a long pathway or platform leading from the stage, such as most performers of legerdemain use when they have occasion to borrow hats' handkerchiefs, etc., in order to enhance their delusions.

The performance was nearly over when Chudwalla came to the end of the walk to borrow a silk hat. In looking around to select some gentleman from whom he might borrow the article, his eyes fell on Mr. Winters, who at the same time looked up. Their eyes met. Chudwalla started. The father of the two boys kept a steady countenance, his nervousness showing itself only by a slight twitching of the lips.

Having secured the desired hat, Chudwalla walked

rapidly back to the stage. Here he spoke a few hurried words to his assistant, who at once left the stage and appeared no more. A few minutes later, Mr. Winters looked around him. He saw the assistant, now divested of his stage costume of Oriental robes and turban. He was dressed in ordinary civilian's clothes. He believed the assistant was intently watching him.

The excited man soon left the theater. Upon going out he caught a glimpse of the assistant in the entrance near the ticket office. When he arrived at the hotel, a block and a half away from the theater, he saw the same individual a few steps behind him. He went at once for the key of his room. The assistant was close at his heels. He could see the number of the peg on the keyboard from which the key was taken.

The next morning he went again to see his lawyer, telling him all he had learned, and dwelling especially on what he called the mysterious shadowing by the assistant.

The legal adviser appreciated the gravity of the situation, but seeing that Mr. Winters was quite excited over the events, he purposely made rather light of them. In a letter he wrote a week later he assured Mr. Winters that he might consider the "shadowing" a mere coincidence, as he had discovered that Chudwalla and his assistant lived at the same hotel where he had been a guest.

In the meantime, however, he recommended his client that he empower him to shadow both Chudwalla and his companion, promising to keep the anxious father fully informed of all their movements.

"I will keep a sharp watch on them, and if it comes to the worst we can have the two arrested."

"But we have no charge against them."

"I think we could charge them with the attempted abduction of Ernest. At all events that would delay their operations until after you had sailed in July. Of course you will take your two boys with you to India?"

"I had not intended to do that. Do you think it the wiser plan?"

"For your own and your wife's peace of mind I should strongly recommend it. Having them with you, whatever may happen, will be better than bearing the suspense of their absence at this critical time."

"But then I should have to take the three girls, too."

"What is the objection to that? I know my girls would be only too pleased to have such an opportunity to travel," said the lawyer, laughing.

And so, Claude, one morning in December, was thrown into a state of wildest excitement by the contents of a letter from his father, telling him that he and Ernest and all the family were going to take a trip to India as soon as he had graduated.

"Whoop la! here's news and no mistake," shouted the excitable boy. He soon told his friends the great news.

"But you won't go, Claude," said Mr. Shalford, who at the moment wore a half-comical, half-earnest look.

"Won't go, sir? You bet I will. Why, it's grand!"

"But doesn't the letter say 'as soon as you have graduated'? Well, as things are going now you will have to change considerably or you will not graduate at all. The fact is, my boy, you are letting your family affairs take up too much of your attention. Your father will attend to these. Your duty is to apply yourself more to your studies."

"But, sir, I—I—" Claude did not know what to say. Mr. Shalford continued:

"I am told your mathematics are not up to the mark. Your semi-annual examination in Philosophy is only a few weeks off. Get to work boy, get to work. You are not doing yourself justice."

There was a great deal of truth in what the prefect said. Whether it was owing to the Philosophers having a room to themselves and being very much alone in the matter of private preparation, or whether the stirring events of the late field-day and the practice for the football games had taken their minds for the time off their studies, it is hard to say. From whatever cause it originated, the fact remained. The Philosophy class, Claude included, were not at present giving satisfaction to their professors. The teachers of philosophy, mathematics, literature, and other branches had all given the prefect of studies more or less unfavorable reports.

Claude felt mortified at the reproof. It was the first real "talking to" he had received since he came to the large yard four years ago.

"I'm awfully sorry, sir. I'm going to change at once."

"Glad to hear it, Claude; I thought a word would be enough."

"You bet. I mean, sir, one word shall be enough. Now you just see. I'm not going to have that said about me again, if I can help it. The others won't either, sir."

Claude was as good as his word. In spite of the mysterious affair which occupied his own and his father's thoughts so much, and notwithstanding he had distraction enough in the delightful prospect of a voyage to India—a prospect which would certainly unsettle any ordinary boy

—Claude went to work vigorously. The others did likewise. Soon all complaints had ceased. The danger of being sent to the common study-hall and of having their cosy class-room closed against them out of class hours was averted.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE INVITATION.

It was not before December that Ambrose Bracebridge could keep his promise of spending Sunday at Rosecroft Manor. Within a very short time after the fall sports the weather changed. During the month of November there was rain, making the roads bad. In the first week of December the weather brightened and a cold wind dried the roads.

Ambrose had written to his father to say that should the weather continue to be fine he would be home to dinner on the following Sunday, and would probably bring two or three companions with him.

"You will come home to dinner with me, Howard, tomorrow," he said to Hunter on Saturday, "if the day is fine, won't you?"

"I don't know, Ambrose," replied Howard, "it seems like imposing on your good nature, and that of your father."

"What does, pray?"

"Going again to Rosecroft Manor. There may be too much of a good thing, you know."

"Who thinks that?"

"Perhaps your father might."

"Now look here, Howard, if ever I hear you say such a thing again I'll become very angry, and I won't speak to you again—for a whole day," he added laughingly. "No, Howard, please do not think that. Father is only too pleased that you and Claude are coming, that is, if the President will grant the permission. Isn't it strange that the President hesitates about him? Winters has not been getting into trouble, has he?"

Hunter laughed aloud at the idea.

"Claude in trouble! Well, I guess not."

He did not tell Ambrose why the President hesitated. The fact was, the Father, owing to Claude's father's evident anxiety for the safety of his sons, did not care to let the boy be long out of his sight.

"If Claude goes I will go, too," said Hunter.

"Thanks. Now I have another idea."

"Dear me! It must be troublesome. Get rid of it as soon as you can. It might hurt."

"See if it does," said Ambrose as quick as lightning, and he squared off in the most approved pugilistic fashion. Howard at once put himself on guard. The two handsome boys stood face to face in a moment, ready for a scientific boxing match without gloves.

Instantly a crowd of boys gathered.

"A fight! a fight!" they shouted as they came running. In the meanwhile Ambrose had slyly winked to Hunter. Hunter nodded intelligently.

"Are you ready," said Bracebridge.

"Yes, come on; I'm not afraid of you."

By this time some of the onlookers had made a ring.

"Come on then," said the apparent aggressor. They closed, and, as quick as thought, linked arms and walked away, both laughing loudly at the way they had fooled the crowd.

"Hooks! hooks!" shouted several boys. Before this corruption for the word "hoaxed" had died away, the crowd had again dispersed. Nowhere in the world can a crowd gather more quickly than in a college yard, and nowhere does it disperse more rapidly.

"What is your idea?" asked Hunter, as soon as the two had ceased laughing.

"It is this," responded the other. "I have taken quite a fancy to big Gilkins. What do you say if I were to get leave for him to come, too?"

Hunter thought some time before answering.

"This requires thinking over, even before you ask the President."

"Why?"

"Well, in the first place, do you think your parents would care to have him come? Would you like him to sit down to table with your mother and sister? May it not be just possible to carry a generous, hospitable father's son's privilege a little too far?"

"Good gracious, Howard, how serious you are!"

"It's rather a serious matter."

"No, it isn't. What's the difference if he does *not* behave with the very best of decorum and all that?"

"This: that you have no right to submit your mother and father nor your sister to any such annoyance, and you certainly have no right to put Gilkins himself in a humiliating position."

"Gilkins," said Bracebridge earnestly, "is a good—

downright good—open, hearty fellow, with a splendid, loyal heart. I'll see that he's not humiliated. One word to papa, and everything will run smoothly."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite. I will easily make that all right at home."

"But will it be all right here? Remember you have now to sustain the reputation of St. Cuthbert's. You are one of us now."

"Thanks! and I'm proud of it. St. Cuthbert's shall not suffer."

"Well, then, I give in. I have no opposition to Gilkins. I begin to admire his sterling earnestness. I was only thinking of your people's possible vexation. Of course you understand I have no objection except on that score."

"Of course. Let's go and see what the President says about it. Hi! Claude, come over here."

When he of the incipient mustache had joined them, they went and rapped at the President's office door.

"Come in, boys; come right in," and the President finished a psalm he was reading from his daily office without looking up. Then putting his finger between the leaves of his breviary, he turned to them.

"The prefect's penances too heavy, eh?" asked the Father, his eyes twinkling pleasantly as usual.

"No penances, Father," said Winters.

"Well, madcap, what do you want?"

"I really don't know, Father; these two called me over just as they started for your room. I don't know what they want."

"Called you to make the delegation stronger, eh? Oh, these young politicians!"

"That's really true, Father," admitted Hunter, "but it's Ambrose who has to do the talking this time."

"Well, my boy, what can I do for you, and I suppose, for these rascals, too?"

The permission for Bracebridge's visit was renewed; that for Winters finally obtained. Then Bracebridge made his suggestion concerning Gilkins, repeating the objections of Hunter and his own replies to them.

"If the case is as you put it, Bracebridge, I grant you the permission to take Gilkins. I am very glad such an occasion has presented itself. I have been watching him for some time and am very pleased with his conduct. His improvement is largely owing to you boys taking an interest in him."

"Thanks, Father," said Hunter.

"You must not expect, Ambrose, that he will be a Chesterfield in this visit; yet it will broaden his views and perhaps give him ideas which in his present satisfactory frame of mind will be most advantageous. Do, please, Claude, keep your eyes off my desk. Don't you know there are the questions for your semi-annual examination?"

"Oh, Father, I wasn't looking, or thinking of looking, at them, indeed I wasn't," said the blushing Claude.

"I didn't say you were," said the President, laughing heartily at Claude's discomfiture. "I only said, please do keep your eyes off."

The head of the college knew when he could unbend, and when be serious. How differently he looked and acted with these boys than when some others whom we know were summoned into his dread presence.

"Give my best respects, Bracebridge, to your father.

Tell him to be sure to come to our Christmas plays. I am sorry he did not stay longer during his last visit."

"I have one request to make, Father, please," said Claude. He was still blushing. In the presence of the President he had never been able not to twirl his cap nervously; never been able not to stand first on one foot and then on the other; never yet been able thoroughly to know what to do with his hands. Claude was not singular in this. Men much older than Claude often find themselves in the same predicament when in the presence of those who represent power, influence, or money. Is not the rich merchant nervous before the bank president? Does not the heavy shipper frequently take off his hat in the office of the general freight agent? How many lawyers are perfectly self-possessed in court in the presence of the judge?

"Of course. What is it, Claude?" asked the President.

"Gilkins has no wheel, sir, and he is not much of a cyclist if he had."

"I suppose, after all, then, he had better stay at home."

The President did not mean this. It amused him to see Claude blush, and squirm and finally blurt out his proposal:

"I want to be allowed to hire a horse for him from the livery stable down on Tenth street."

"You do! That wouldn't do, my boy. He would not like that, either. Nor do I think he himself is allowed sufficient pocket money for such extravagance."

Claude's face fell. The others looked perplexed.

"I tell you what I'll do. I will give you a note to the farm manager to have Doll at the front door by nine o'clock to-morrow morning. Will that do?"

"Oh, thank you, Father, thank you, thank you! You are a—very kind."

Claude was in his enthusiasm, going to say a "brick," but reverence for the President stopped him. It was well it did, for if he had been asked to explain the term, it is quite possible he would have been unable, with hundreds of others, to say why the name of a piece of kiln-dried clay should be chosen to express approbation of some personal quality.

Was there ever so surprised a boy as Clarence Gilkins half an hour later? Had he dreamed of such a thing as an invitation to one of the largest and best private houses in the State, and that by the son of the owner and as a guest—had he dreamed of this three short months ago, he would have begun to doubt his own sanity.

Bracebridge and his friends were highly pleased with his modest but earnest self-deprecation and with the many ingeniously invented excuses for not accepting the invitation, especially as under it all they detected a real desire to go. They were delighted, after all his arguments against himself had been refuted, to see him finally succumb to the prospect of a good long canter on horseback. He was, as all country boys are, passionately fond of horses. When he learned that a saddle horse had been placed at his disposal all his reluctance gave way. He could not resist that.

"Rah for Stalksey!" shouted Claude, as he skipped around him in glee.

Gilkins, on hearing the latest nickname, became very serious.

"Look here, Winters," he said, "if you fellows are going out there to call me nicknames, you can count me out.

I'm awkward enough, I know, without having gentlemen and ladies laughing at me through you."

"No, no, no, no, old man. Of course I won't. It's all my fun among ourselves. Trust me, Clarence, I promise you to do nothing to annoy you there."

"If he does, I have a little story on him which happened last year before you came, about a certain substance in solution, and a certain—" began Hunter, mischievously.

"Oh, Howard, please don't give me away," interrupted Claude in a pleading tone.

"What is it?" eagerly asked Gilkins, who was anxious to get a hold on his young tease.

"Don't tell him, Howard," and there was a world of pleading in the madcap's voice.

"I will—" began Howard.

"Do, do," urged Gilkins.

"Don't, please don't," begged Claude again.

"Well, I won't, unless I see you begin at Gilkins any time to-morrow while we are at the Manor."

The reader of these chronicles of St. Cuthbert's college has probably not forgotten that when Major Bracebridge's black team ran away near the college the previous year, and was cleverly stopped by some of the young people who figure in these pages, Claude Winters had dipped up water with his hat from a ditch to resuscitate the fainting Rose Bracebridge. On that occasion her face and hat and dress had been deluged with yellow liquid mud. For weeks after, Claude did not hear the last of the episode, all his friends teasing him most unmercifully for using even a fainting lady so uncavalierly. This year the incident had been forgotten until this minute, when Hunter had revived it.

Winters was, for some reason or other, more sensitive to this bit of chaffing than to anything else. That is the reason why he pleaded so earnestly with Hunter not to divulge the secret to one who as yet had heard nothing of it.

The morning broke, a bright, crisp December day. At nine the four started on their ten-mile spin—three on wheels, and the fourth proudly mounted on a fine saddle horse. Cycling, although not conducive to general conversation, has a fascination all its own. It keeps the mind alert, exercising every muscle in the body and setting the blood a-tingling. The bracing wind and exhilarating exercise painted the boys' cheeks, and made their usually bright eyes now snap and sparkle.

They had traveled a little over half the journey when they met Major Bracebridge's coachman driving a small wagonette. He was coming toward St. Cuthbert's to bring his young master home. He turned his horses.

"There is room for your bicycles, gentlemen, as well as yourselves, if you care to jump in."

"Oh, no, John," said Ambrose, "you don't catch us in a carriage when the roads are good enough for wheeling."

Not to be too tired, however, or overheated on their arrival, they rode the last mile, Ambrose telling the driver to drive slowly.

When the party arrived at the gates of the avenue the boys saw the grand old trees in all their winter bareness. The large pines and cedars and firs gave the grounds a certain unique winter beauty. The mansion, instead of being covered with one mass of green creeping vines, was now merely veined over with clinging, delicate stems

much resembling arteries. It had a winter beauty all its own.

"I am sorry I've come!" said Claude, suddenly.

"Why?" said Howard, in unfeigned astonishment.

"Because my mental picture of the beauty—the summer beauty—of Rosecroft Manor, with all its wonderful display of roses and rich foliage, is now destroyed by this winter scene."

"Hurry up, Ambrose; land him gently," said Howard. "He's gone sentimental. Take him quickly into the house. He may have a fit. Poor fellow! Isn't it sad! So young, too!"

"If these wheels weren't between me and—" began Claude, but he never finished. Ambrose shouted:

"There's papa at the door. Whip up, John."

The carriage came round the circular front drive in good style. Gilkins followed close to the carriage. Barely letting the horses stop, Ambrose sprang out and embraced his father. The two boys in the carriage saw a hurried whisper and caught a few words—"Gilkins—our side—put the shot—rough diamond—good fellow—splendid—thanks," and they knew the day would be a pleasant one for Clarence Gilkins.

CHAPTER XXII.

GILKINS FINDS FRIENDS.

"CLAUDE is sorry he came, mamma," said Ambrose, as soon as he had embraced his mother and sister.

"Oh, Mrs. Bracebridge, please do not believe him! He's worse than Howard for saying things about me, isn't he, Stal—I mean, isn't he, Gilkins?"

"Indeed I do not believe him in this case," said Mrs. Bracebridge. "You are heartily welcome, all of you."

"What's my boy been saying about you, Master Claude?" asked the Major.

"He is the one that's saying it all," interposed the Major's son, laughing. "He began by talking about mental pictures and phantasms of Rosecroft just now, so that we thought he was going to have a fit."

"Don't you believe them, Mr. Bracebridge, either," said Claude. "I said I was sorry I came here in winter, because of my recollection of the beauty of the place in the summer. It has a winter beauty, too, but it is not so pretty in winter here as in summer, is it, sir?"

"Of course not, my lad. These boys can't appreciate beauty, Claude, can they? I tell you what," he said, winking at Claude, "you and I will be a match for them yet before the day is out, won't we, eh? and then—" and the fun-loving Major began to make motions to indicate that other fellows' sides and arms would be sore before the valiant pair had done with them.

"At all events, gentlemen, I am delighted you have come, and so is mamma, and so is Rose, too. By the way, here, Ambrose, are Howard and Claude, but you haven't told me your new friend's name."

"This is Clarence Gilkins, pa," said Ambrose, "and I must apologize to him and to you for not introducing him before—it was, of course, Claude's fault. He is on our side at college; you remember he won two prizes on the field-day? He is one of our set."

The host and hostess warmly welcomed Gilkins, telling him that with such recommendations he was welcome. Long ago the Major had learned from his son's letters what "our side" and "our set" meant. He saw at a glance that the boy had not received such advantages as the other three, yet he was quick to notice a good honest soul shining out of good honest eyes. He was pleased with Ambrose for having been kind to him.

"Well, Clarence," said the warm-hearted Major, again heartily shaking his hand. "I am glad you have come. You must make yourself perfectly at home. I have heard all about you from my boy's letters. He has said lots of good things of you."

"Of me, sir! Ambrose!" said big Gilkins, very much astonished.

"Of course. Keep on the way you are going, my lad; act on principle, not because you always like it, but because it's right, and there is no telling what honorable career is before you. You are very welcome."

Gilkins had never in his life been made so much of. How kind everybody was! Who would believe, thought he, that these rich and great people could be so kind and pleasant and have so little ceremony about them. And

then to be treated with such equality! It made him think more of himself, that is, it gave him more self-respect. The visit to Rosecroft Manor was having just that beneficial effect on him which the President of St. Cuthbert's had anticipated.

He had never been in so fine a house in his life. Pictures, majolica ware, vases, palms, rich, old-fashioned furniture, flowers, and, permeating all, the grace of a perfectly refined home, were revelations to this boy. Crude as he was, in a certain way he was keenly observant. He learned many things from his visit.

"Have the St. Cuthbert folks, Ambrose, yet made you a Catholic?" asked Major Bracebridge at the early dinner. He put the question, partly in earnest, partly in jest.

"Would you object, sir, if they had?"

"Not in the least, my boy, providing that if you change you become a good one."

"No, sir, I have not changed," replied the son. "The fact is, there has not been a single person since I have been there who has said a word to me about religion."

"What—do you mean to say that no one has attempted to make a Roman Catholic of you?" and he winked at the other boys, showing them he was only joking.

"No one. Indeed, pa, they are very fair. I must confess that when I first went I was a little afraid they would try. But they did not."

"Yes, we did," put in Claude, to the astonishment of everybody.

"No, you did not, not one. Nobody did anything except answer some questions."

"Yes, we did," persisted the small-sized Philosopher.

"When? How? I don't remember."

"We did try, sir, to make Ambrose a Catholic. We are trying yet."

"Don't believe them, father. Claude is romancing again."

"No, I am not. I'll show you how I'm not. We have a little society among Ambrose's friends who have bound themselves to pay for his conversion to the Catholic faith."

Whether Winters should have publicly revealed the secret of this organization, which was founded during their visit to the Manor the previous June, is a matter of dispute among the friends to this day.

The revelation wonderfully affected Major Bracebridge. After a long pause, he said in an earnest and subdued tone:

"I was partly joking when I began these questions, but what you say about your little society touches me deeply. You boys must value a faith very much which would induce you to take such measures for a friend's conversion to it. I thank you very much, for I know you wish my son well. But, Howard, will you answer me one question?"

"If I can, sir, I will."

"Very good. Now, do you, as a Catholic, believe that I, because I am not of your Church, will not be saved?"

"Do you believe the Catholic Church to be right and your own wrong?" asked Hunter, by way of preliminary reply.

"Certainly not."

"Would you be willing, sir, to accept the Catholic faith if you were to think it was the true faith?"

"Under those conditions I certainly would."

"Now, sir, I hope you will not be offended if I ask an apparently impertinent question."

"Not in the least. Do not be afraid. What is it?"

"It is this. Are you baptized?" said Howard, blushing at his own boldness.

"Of course. All of us. We are Christians. Did you think we were pagans?"

Major Bracebridge appeared highly amused at the boy's question.

"Then, sir," said Howard, "I believe you will be saved if you avoid mortal sin, or perfectly repent of it, for you belong to the soul of the Church. I believe you are in good faith. I beg your pardon, Major Bracebridge," said the blushing boy, "for talking so plainly and asking you so many questions. I am only a boy and it sounded impertinent, but you asked me to speak as a Catholic."

"Capital," said the Major, "but I think I have you yet. If you think I shall be saved if I avoid mortal sin—because the supposition is I am in good faith and therefore belong to the soul of the Church but do not belong to the body or visible society—what then is the necessity for me to be a professing Catholic at all, since I am safe as it is?"

"Excuse me, sir," said Howard, still blushing furiously, "you pertain to the soul of the Church so long as you are invincibly and inculpably ignorant of her demands upon you, because just in proportion to your blameless ignorance are you in good faith. Then, being outside the visible Church, you are deprived of her sacraments. These, as you know, are outward visible signs, instituted by Christ, of inward and spiritual graces. A man without these, it seems to me, is like a man without arms and

legs; still a man, yet without the almost essential aid to living."

Major Bracebridge saw that Hunter spoke about these things with evident reluctance, not wishing to give offense. He was pleased with the boy's ready and clear answers, given with earnest conviction and without compromise. The young man's words, indeed, gave the host food for reflection for many a subsequent hour.

Not wishing to torment the boy, or destroy the pleasure of his meal, the Major turned the conversation to horses.

On this subject Gilkins was quite at home, and the other boys took a kindly pleasure in drawing him out. Soon he and their host were deep in the mysteries of "points" and racers and roadsters, which ended by the Major and Gilkins walking off, as soon as the ladies arose from table, and inspecting the stables, where several fine animals were stalled.

It was rather late in the afternoon when the four boys left the hospitable Manor. Mr. Bracebridge wanted to send them home in a carriage, but they would not hear of that. All were too fond of cycling, and had not Gilkins a fine roadster?

Rose Bracebridge and her mother shook Gilkins' hand warmly at parting. Their entertaining had been so sincere and so kindly, and their leave-taking so genuine, that the big fellow was enchanted.

A new field of vision had opened on his mental horizon.

He had been put so much at his ease during the visit, that by the time of departure his hands and feet had ceased to appear gigantic and excessively in the way. In

fact he forgot them, and this, for Gilkins, was certainly a great stride forward.

On his way home, his laudations of the whole family, while evidently genuine, were, to Ambrose's mind, so extravagant, that that young gentleman, in sheer self-defense, had to stop them. This he did by calling for a sprint.

Now we know from the field-day classification of the wheelmen that Claude Winters was far below Hunter in speed, and it is therefore not surprising that the other two soon began to draw away from him.

"Go on," Claude shouted, "don't wait for me. I'll get home a few minutes after you. Neither of you can beat Gilkins' horse, anyway."

The two wheelmen and the man in the saddle settled down to a good six miles' spin. In their enjoyment they did not notice that they were rapidly increasing the distance between Claude and themselves. At a bend of the road, five miles from the college, Claude lost sight of them altogether.

On arriving at the college the three at once reported to the prefect.

"I thought Claude Winters went too," said Mr. Shalford.

"Yes, sir, he is behind on the road. He will be here in a few minutes. We outrode him altogether," said Hunter.

The few minutes lengthened into half an hour, three-quarters, an hour, and no Claude appeared. The President, who knew of Mr. Winters' anxiety at this particular time, when he learned of the boy's absence, began now to regret having granted the permission to go so

far from the college. Suppose now there had happened that which Claude's father particularly dreaded! When the hour had elapsed he told Gilkins to procure another horse from the stables and retrace his steps to the spot where they had separated.

Gilkins fully expected to meet Claude close to home, but he went over four miles without a trace of him. Then he began to get nervous for his little friend, fearful that some mishap had befallen him. It was now almost dark. He asked every one whom he met whether they had seen a solitary college boy on a wheel going in the direction of St. Cuthbert's. He could get no information in this way. Just at the bend of the road where Claude had lost sight of his companions Gilkins saw a light in front of a farmhouse near the road. Coming nearer, he discerned that it was a lantern on the front porch. Near it, leaning against the house, was Claude's wheel.

Hastily dismounting, he rapped at the door and inquired for the missing boy.

"Yes, a college student is here. Did you come from the college?" inquired a kindly-faced farmer, whose coarse, even squalid working-clothes and prosaic surroundings appeared in strange contrast to his intelligent face and careful manner of speaking.

"Yes, I came from there. We are anxious about him. Is he here? What is the matter?"

"I'm all right, Gilkie, old man. Come right in," came Claude's voice from an inside room.

"What are you stopping here for, then, instead of coming home?" asked Gilkins, as he entered the cosy sleeping-room.

The farmer answered for him. He was coming up

Undertaker's Hill, as most of the bicyclists call the steep incline just around the bend, when his wheel struck a stone and he was thrown. I saw him fall and ran to help him. He received a slight cut on his head, and has badly sprained his ankle. Already he cannot stand on it. A dark-skinned man, with remarkably black eyes, happened to be passing and he helped me to carry him into the house. This man said he knew the boy, and would go and fetch a carriage for him."

"Who was it, Claude? It could have been no one from the college, because everybody there is anxious about you."

"I'm sure I don't know," answered Claude. "I was half-stunned, you know, and don't remember much. It seemed, however, that I had seen the face somewhere, but for the life of me I cannot recall where. Ouch!"

The last word was occasioned by the good-natured farmer's wife attempting to move the injured foot while bathing it in cool water.

"Can't he be moved?" asked Gilkins.

"I do not think so," said the man of the house. "At least not till morning."

"Will you take care of him until a carriage comes in the morning?"

"As I would of my own boy," said the woman. "Tell the Fathers at the college not to be the least bit uneasy about him. You can have him in the morning, but the poor child cannot be moved to-night. If the stranger comes with the carriage he said he was going for, I'll pay him for his trouble, but I won't let the boy go."

There was nothing for Gilkins to do but to ride post-haste back and report. An hour or so later, a carriage

from the college drove up to the farmhouse, but as Claude had just dozed off to sleep between a pair of immaculate, lavender-perfumed sheets, Mr. Shalford did not disturb him. After heartily thanking the hospitable farmer and his wife, he promised to come for the boy early in the morning.

When the President heard Gilkins' story of the promised carriage by the stranger, he sent two able-bodied, trustworthy farmhands to watch the house all night, with order to permit no one, no matter what the reason given, to remove Winters.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SOME HISTRIONIC FUN.

CLAUDE was lame for a couple of weeks. During the night in which he was so kindly treated by the hospitable people at the farmhouse, the mysterious carriage failed to appear. The incident was soon forgotten, and never recalled by Claude until some months later and many hundreds of miles away from the spot where he met with his accident.

At length the year drew to a close. Many events occurred worthy of chronicling. Regretfully we have to pass over the account of the fun and frolic of the plays during the Christmas holidays of that year. Oh, those Christmas plays! Is there any other form of amusement equal to them? The practice; the costuming; the make-up; the dress rehearsal; the delight and the stage fright! That transforming grease-paint! How charming the

faces look from a distance! What frights when seen in a looking-glass!

What old student—now a grave and reverend senior—whose sons are now attending St. Cuthbert's and cutting and scratching the desks as their father, in his day, did before them—does not look back with a longing regret to those times of long ago, now vanished like a dream forever? When he opens the college paper and sees his boy's ambitious contribution, he lives his own school-days over again. As he reads the youngster's article there is a kindling warmth around his eyes. He sees, too, in imagination, and with a joy all his own, his child's eyes sparkling with pride and satisfaction, while wondering what pa will think of his effort.

What does pa—the now grave and reverend senior—think of the effort? Is he pleased? Is he satisfied? Under that vest now assuming aldermanic proportions there beats a heart that is as young as that of his boy. What though he finds the old leather-bound armchair—of aldermanic proportions, too—daily more and more to his liking, yet the heart beneath the top buttons of that vest beats in youthful unison with his own boy's! He reads the article. He chuckles and laughs and laughs again. It's all right, sir, you are alone in your smoking den. Your grave and reverend business cronies downtown will never know, not even "mamma" downstairs awaiting you and the dinner-bell, will ever know that you actually danced—all to yourself and unobserved—actually danced a fandango of delight at your boy's first appearance in his college journal! Your secret's safe with me.

The father drops into a brown study. In retrospective

mood he rises from his chair, turns the light higher, unlocks the glass doors of his bookcase, and—of course he wants something to read to while away a half-hour before dinner!—takes out an old bound copy of the college journal of over twenty years ago. Heigho! time flies! Of course it is by accident that he turns to his own first printed composition, and, of course, by accident again, his own and his boy's productions are placed side by side.

He does not intend to institute a comparison. The idea! As if a boy could write as well as his father! He reads his own article. Yes, in the light of his own now more mature knowledge he sees there are a few involved and more or less obscure sentences. The ideas are not quite so clear as he thought they were when he first proudly saw them in print!

Then he reads his son's effort. What! More lucid! Better construction of sentences! Clearer, sounder thought! Is it possible that the young rascal has outstripped his own father? The next letter that Harry or Willie receives from home contains a five dollar bill. What was that for, I wonder?

The father passes from his boy's article to other items in the college journal. Ah, here's an account of the college Christmas plays! Here's that young rascal again figuring prominently. Well, the young rascal's father did the same when he was a boy. The preternaturally wise criticism of the actors histrionic capacities, by one of their own number, is read. He smiles, and turns to his own old copy. Yes, there's a similar account of himself. History is repeating itself, almost to the details. While he reads he is living over his own triumphs again in those of his son.

The paper drops from his hand. Another brown study. He is again on the old stage in the gymnasium—not the fine modern stage of St. Cuthbert's—and he lives over again an evening of long ago. How the footlights smoke! How his stage sword will get between his legs! What fears that that fierce mustache will not stay on! That stupid prompter is barely whispering. Speak out, man! Throw your voice to the back scene, and the audience will never hear you, even if you were to shout. Isn't it suffocatingly hot! The face powder must be coming off. (His acting was done in the days long before the advent of grease-paints.)

The old gentleman, or rather the elderly gentleman, remembers how angry he was when, coming off the stage in a burst of glory and amid a storm of applause, someone maliciously held up a looking-glass before him, and he saw that the rivulets of perspiration had cut channels through the powder and made his face resemble that of a striped zebra! Then how angry was the professor of Rhetoric who had trained the boys, when the actors would dance behind the curtain during the interludes. He remembered with amusement that the same staid professor had almost danced himself when the curtain dropped for the last time on "the most successful play the boys had ever produced."

"Ah, well," he said to himself, "we boys used to think those professors and prefects of old St. Cuthbert's were pretty much of tyrants in those days. I guess my boys at St. Cuthbert's of the present day think their successors are just about the same. But bless their dear old hearts. They trained me in head and heart too, so that through them I am what I am to-day. God bless those old hard-

working, devoted men; and God bless their successors too."

It is hard to say where these reminiscences would have led, had not the wife's call to dinner, and the postman's knock, bringing the evening mail with letters from his boys, broken up the reverie. Time had turned backward for one short half hour and the man had been a boy again.

"The pranks we played with paint and powder and costume" brings us back to an event which occurred not long after the Christmas holidays of the year in which our young friends graduated.

It all happened in this wise.

John Philip Watkins Gray, who believed he could take care of himself, but who found that in practice it was not so easy as in theory, had been appointed a "supe," or attendant soldier in the suite of Solinus, duke of Ephesus, in Shakespeare's "Comedy of Errors," which had been given by the larger boys that Christmas week. His helmet and shield and spear, as well as his trunks and tights and stage boots, had all suited and fitted him well. Having no experience in stage make-up, he had permitted some wag to paste on his upper lip a thick black mustache large enough to make five of the fiercest mustaches ever worn by the fiercest whiskerandos. It appeared to the audience "like a thick black brush stuck beneath his nose." His face, to be in keeping with the mustache, had been daubed and darkened by unskillful hands, so that he partly resembled a very sick negro and partly typified the burlesque policeman.

The novel position of being behind the footlights made him unusually awkward. He knew not how to stand, nor

walk, nor move with any kind of grace or with even passable ease.

Several boys watched him with amusement unconcealed. It is not surprising, therefore, that a few days after the Christmas holidays, when routine work had been resumed with all its rigor, and there was absolutely "nothing going on," that five or six boys were seen with their heads together, hatching out some scheme. Had one listened he would have learned that John Philip Watkins Gray was the destined victim.

"Come over to the music-room, Gray," said one of the conspirators, as that individual sauntered up to the group; "we have an important proposition to make to you."

John Philip Watkins Gray made the great mistake of his life and—went.

"We watched you on the stage during the play," said one, "and we are all sure that you have great dramatic ability. Isn't that so, boys?"

The other five gave demonstrative assent. Gray began to believe that he had cut a fine figure on the stage after all.

"H-h'm," he coughed. This was intended for a modest disclaimer.

"Now don't be bashful, Gray," said the first speaker, "you have talent in that line, and we know it. It isn't everybody who can realize his own talent at once, but we are sure that long ago you have discovered your own powers. We consider you a first-class actor—one of the best we have at college. I consider it a shame they did not give you the part of a Dromio, or an Antipholus, or at least that of Solinus. You would have beaten any one

who took these parts in the *Comedy of Errors*, and that's saying a good deal."

Gray began to believe that after all he must be an actor, although previously not conscious of it. He looked gratified.

"Oh, come! You're putting it on too thick, Smith," whispered Conspirator No. 2 to the spokesman.

"No danger. He hasn't gumption enough. See, he's beginning to nibble already," was the reply, given sotto voce, and then, aloud, Smith said:

"Of course you have been in lots of plays at home, eh?"

"Of co—that is, I once recited 'How doth the little busy bee' at our parish school."

"Ah! that's the ticket. How does it go? Like this, isn't it?

"How doth the little busy wasp
Delight to bark and bite,
And gather honey all the day
And eat it up at night."

"Splendid! You're the man—the coming man. Now see here, old fellow! We have decided that your talents have been hidden in a coal sack too long. Listen—we—are—going—to—bring—you—Out; out with a great big capital O! See?"

Gray did not see, but he tried to look modest, and—waited.

"There's no reason why one who is equal to *Cyrano de Bergerac* or *Richelieu* should remain in obscurity any longer. Isn't that so, you fellows?"

All responded enthusiastically that they saw no earthly reason why the present state of affairs should continue. Had Gray been less obtuse he would have noticed that

the enthusiasm was slightly over-demonstrative. But he was caught by the glamor of the prospective triumph, and the boys' honeyed words. His appreciation of himself was growing immensely and rapidly.

"What do you fellows want me to do, or rather what do you think I can do?" he asked.

"I think you can do anything you put your hand to," answered Smith, the joker. "Knowing your dramatic ability, and being sure you will cover yourself with in-eradicable and inextinguishable glory, we have decided to offer you the leading part in an extravaganza we are thinking of getting up as a sort of surprise to the professors and prefects as well as the boys, on Washington's birthday."

"What is it?" asked Gray eagerly.

"First you must be bound to secrecy, because if the prefects learn of it beforehand, the surprise will fall flat, and the thing will not be worth going on with. See?"

"Yes, I see. I'll promise to tell nobody except—that is, I won't give it away. What's my part to be?" asked the flattered and easily duped boy.

He was, in the peculiar college phraseology, "dead easy." The conspirators were surprised at the ease with which they drew him into the snare.

"The character we have chosen for you is the part of Mad Sir Anthony. It is very difficult, but we know that you, if anybody, can manage it. It may be taken from a play of Beaumont or Fletcher or some other old English dramatist for aught I know. The story is this. Sir Anthony is insane and doesn't know it. His friends do. He thinks he will have some fun with his servants and his guests by pretending to be insane. His friends, in

order to humor him, pretend it is all fine, and try to coax him into an insane asylum. He refuses to go, and they finally capture him and carry him off in triumph. Fine plot, isn't it?"

"Ye-es," said John Philip Watkins Gray, rather dubiously.

"Of course you will have most of the lines. The others are merely foils for you. You'll never have such a chance again in your life."

"As the other characters have lines of no importance, it is not necessary for any of us to practice yet a while, until yours are learned and practiced perfectly," said Conspirator No. 2.

"Oh, that's not fair," said a third boy, who was in the plot against Gray, in order to keep up the delusion.

"Yes, it is," said Smith. "Didn't we all promise to help train the principal actor before we began our own parts?"

"Well, but—" said the second, in feigned hesitation.

"All I've got to say, then," said Smith, in apparent earnestness, for he was no inconsiderable actor himself, "if you fellows are going back on your promises I throw up the whole affair, that's all."

Gray's forthcoming glory began to fade, and his visions of histrionic triumph grew dim.

"Oh, don't do that. I want you fellows to train me," he said.

It was wonderful what straight faces the boys kept during this pretended dispute, and at Gray's words. They had no idea in the beginning that their plans would meet with anything like such success.

"We must stick to our original intention," said Smith,

"of training Gray first and thoroughly before we begin our own practice with him."

They finally solemnly agreed to do as their chief speaker suggested.

"Very well. Now, Hess, give Gray his first speech. When he has learned and practiced that, the rest of his part will be forthcoming."

Hess drew from his pocket a paper and began to read:

SIR ANTHONY—

"Hush! listen! I am a little mouse,
But now is the winter of our discontent,
Made glorious when I write a letter to papa.
Lend me thine ear. See to it, 'tis not too small,
A fellow of infinite jest and merit.
Hold! I command you both. The man that stirs
Away with sighing and grieving, I'll no more on't,
For I have had a fearful dream.
The blood-red moon smiles down on Jessica
While Simon, he sits in his high-backed chair,
Oh! willow, willow, willow! Alas! and alack!
Little Bo-Peep lies fast asleep.
No! by heaven! I'm not mad,
No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.
Ha! ah! Sir Galahad, I drink to thee only with mine eyes.
Oh! sweet Ophelia shall bring cornflowers for the tomb."

The boys kept solemn faces while Hess read this rubbish. Gray was mystified. His eyes traveled occasionally from face to face. Knowing that they were under scrutiny, luckily for their plan no one's gravity gave way.

"That's Sir Anthony's first speech," remarked Smith. "Do you think you can manage it?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," said the dupe. "But—"

"Oh, those abominable 'buts'! But me no buts. Come on, boys, let's steal upstairs to the stage and we will begin practicing at once."

Gray was hurried along with the rest up the stairs and

on to the stage. The paper was thrust into his hand. He was told to begin at once. The boys skipped about the hall in a very lively manner. Just at that moment motion was absolutely necessary for the practical jokers if they did not want to betray themselves.

"Now begin," ordered Smith.

Then in reality began more fun than any half dozen boys ever dreamed could be extracted from one individual. Words, sentences, phrases were purposely misinterpreted. Tones, poses, gestures—even those suitable to any individual sentence or line of the nonsensical medley, were disregarded. The more absurd the interpretation the better. Grotesque contortions, regardless of all sense or propriety, made the lines more ridiculous, if that were possible, than they were in themselves.

"Hush! listen! I am a little mouse," began Gray, in a fairly good stage whisper.

"Oh, that won't do at all—never do," shouted Hess from the floor in front of the stage. "Use the grand orotund there. Stand up as if you were going to fight a gladiator in the arena, or imagine yourself a general giving orders for a charge. Like this."

"Hush! listen! I am a little mouse!"

The docile Gray followed the instructions blindly.

"Louder!" shouted Smith, "louder!" Gray raised his voice until at length he fairly screamed. The conspirators screamed, also, with delight, which Gray took for approbation.

"Made glorious when I write a letter to papa."

"No, no, that won't do," said Smith. "Here, like this: 'Made ge-lor-ious,' sorrow and shame there; 'when I write' should be given soft and low, soft as the whisper-

ing pines, you know, and all that; then a 'letter to papa' must be a grand burst of oratorical confidence (whatever that may mean), followed by a stride of three steps cornerwise across the stage, and to be finished by a long 'ah!' in the heaviest tragedy style. Man alive! no sane madman would ever give that as you are giving it."

To the surprise of the boys, Gray followed the instructions, notwithstanding their evident contradiction. He seemed to regard the whole affair as a very serious piece of business, taking every remark quite earnestly. Every moment the boys expected that he would see through their joke and turn the tables on them in some way. As their victim was a very much larger boy than any one of them, they were all prepared for instant flight. But no enlightenment came to relieve the obtuseness of Gray's intellect. There were perpetrated for the space of half an hour the most absurd atrocities against the rules of breathing, of posing, of gesture, and of speaking, that perhaps ever fell to the lot of a company of mischievous boys to witness. The laughter of the boys made their sides ache, but Gray seemed to take it all as a compliment to his powers. When the boys could stand no more, another practice was arranged for three days hence, with a promise to take then the measurements for the construction of the madman's costume, which, Gray was assured, was to be unique in design and material.

In less than half an hour after the first successful ruse, at least twenty boys were mysteriously informed that Gray would soon blossom out as a star tragedian who would surprise everybody. When approached to confirm the rumor, his promise of secrecy was sorely tested.

"Oh, nonsense!" said Mr. Shalford, when informed of

the floating rumor that Gray was to appear on February 22, Mr. Shalford knew all the boys who were to take part in the entertainment of that evening. The prefect took no notice of the first intimation he received, but when it came a third, fourth, and fifth time to his ears, in that mysterious way in which yard affairs always come to prefects, he began to think that perhaps some of the boys were again attempting another practical joke on Gray. He determined to be on the alert, and, if such were the case, to save the boy from another mortification.

"I did not see you in the yard this afternoon," he said to Gray one evening, two days after the commencement of the practice. "Were you sick?"

"No, sir, I was busy," was the evasive reply.

"At what?"

"Learning some poetry."

"Penances? Or have you suddenly turned studious? Look out, my boy, and don't let the boys fool you again."

Now Gray was determined to keep the secret and not destroy the surprise, so he said:

"They can't fool me, sir."

Which statement, in the light of previous experience, Mr. Shalford did not think possessed an extraordinary amount of credibility.

"Well, if anything happens, don't say I did not warn you."

Now Gray thought that the prefect was bent on worming the secret of the forthcoming surprise out of him, so he determined to give him no information. He remained silent.

About a week later, Mr. Shalford missed several boys from the yard. Amid the thousand and one things of his

office which necessarily occupied his attention, the question of Gray again getting into trouble had entirely slipped from his mind. It suddenly occurred to him, considering the absence of several very tricky youngsters—and Gray—that perhaps after all there was foundation in fact for the intangible rumor that Gray was being woefully duped.

Taking a hasty stroll around the yard, looking into the gymnasium, the reading-rooms, play-rooms and everywhere where boys up to mischief were likely to congregate on a winter recreation day, he finally decided to go up to the hall. In going about he usually jingled some keys, consciously or unconsciously giving warning of his approach. He may have adopted this custom purposely, to avoid inflicting penances. All the boys admitted that his prefecting had no semblance of detective work in it, and the result was that, in the majority of cases, there were perfectly honorable dealings among the boys.

In going up to the theater he did not rattle his keys as usual, owing to a pre-occupation of mind. The door of the hall was open, but there was a screen in front of it, placed there to prevent a draft from the stairway. He thus obtained a view of the stage without being seen by any one in the hall. He heard some strange sounds. In all the notes of the gamut he heard the words:

"No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no," and then, leaning on a spear, with his left leg crossed over the right and resting on the toes, with his right thumb touching his ear and the fingers pointed forward and rapidly moving and with eyes cast sideways, Gray gave the next line in a soft, lackadaisical voice:

"Sir Galahad, drink to me only with mine eyes."

There was Gray in the "constructed" costume. For tunic he wore an old grain sack, not over-clean, through two holes in which he had thrust his legs. It was tied on him up around his arms. Around his neck was a stiff Elizabethan ruff of brown paper, which must have been a torture for the poor boy. The sack was ornamented with a short skirt of green cheesecloth, from which material were made a pair of sleeves with enormously puffed shoulders. Across his back he wore, shield-fashion, the tin lid of a wash-boiler. The spear on which he leaned was ornamented near the head with a small American flag.

It would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to conceive a more grotesquely-costumed figure, and still harder to imagine how a big boy could have taken the matter all along in sober earnest, apparently quite unsuspecting of the huge joke being played upon him.

Mr. Shalford walked out into the middle of the floor.

"What's all this?"

At the first glimpse of him Gray vanished. There was so complete a silence that Smith afterward declared that you could have cut it with a knife.

"Oh, sir, we were only hav—" began one.

"Get downstairs, all of you."

"But, sir, we only meant—"

"Get downstairs."

By this time Gray had appeared, properly clothed, if not in his right mind. The conspirators and their victim made an extremely rapid descent, fully convinced that they were "in for it" now in earnest.

It was fortunate for the dignity of the prefect, and for discipline's sake that the boys retired so hurriedly, for the

next moment Mr. Shalford, who always had a keen eye for the humorous and the ludicrous, and who, perhaps in remembrance of his own college days, had a secret sympathy for these scapegrace jokers, collapsed. He sat down on the nearest seat and for a few moments gave way to a fit of unrestrained, because uncontrollable, laughter.

"You goose," he said to Gray a little later in the yard. "Didn't I tell you those boys were up to something?"

Gray looked preternaturally wise, and in no degree penitent. His mind was still full of the play. He was perfectly unconscious of having been fooled.

Six days later, when all had finished reciting their penances, Gray remarked:

"Say, fellows, wasn't it a pity old Shalford caught us? I wonder whether we couldn't win him over to let us go on and give the boys a surprise on Washington's birthday."

Smith and Hess are now married men, both conducting large businesses. Gray, *mirabile dictu!* has recently been elected State representative of his district. The three met recently, and the two both solemnly aver that Gray is, to this day, totally unaware that he was a victim of a practical joke. They call him Sir Anthony, which title he rather enjoys. Only yesterday he expressed his regret that the prefect had interrupted their practice.

"We would have given the boys a surprise, sure."

Smith and Hess agreed with him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RETROSPECTIVE.

THE end had come. The year had passed all too quickly. It wanted but one day to those graduating exercises which would make our young friends of the Philosophy class the proud possessors of pieces of beribboned parchment which would give them a legal title to the coveted "Bachelor of Arts." Every member of the class had been successful in the examinations, although of course some had shone more brilliantly than others. Of this class was our friend Claude Winters, to his ecstatic delight, which found expression, the others declared, in the most "insane antics" and "conduct quite unbecoming a Philosopher."

In the gladness of his success it was no use to chide him. Claude had declared that for a time he had to "cut up" or something somewhere would give way, or the universe slip a cog.

Now evening had come, and there was a lull in mutual congratulations, sport, and fun. It was the last evening at school. All were awaiting the end, which would come on the morrow.

Howard Hunter, Frank Stapleton, Selby, and, of course, Claude, had strolled out of the grounds to an elevated ideal spot not far from the river, where there could be obtained a panoramic view of the college. This academic grove was a favorite resort of the Philosophers, far enough away from the noise and shouts of the yard, close enough to be within sound of the warning bell. Some

rustic benches had been placed under the trees, in a spot where an unobstructed view could be obtained.

In this little leafy bower sat our friends, now silent and introspective, although not morose, nor uninfluenced by the beauty of the summer evening.

The not unmusical tinkle of a cowbell sounded softly away in the woods behind the farm-buildings of the college. Not far away, two farmhands waited at the gate with their milk pails at their feet, to turn the slow returning cows into the home paddock for the milking. There was a drowsy hum of insects in the air, and the "beetle wheeled his droning flight" amid the wild honeysuckle bushes as the sun slowly sank below the horizon. All labor sounds had ceased. There was that restful calm which makes country life—at least for a few months in the summer time—so restful and Arcadian to the nervous and office-tired city man.

The boys silently watched the large-eyed, sleepy cows, one by one, file slowly into the paddock and stand with almost pathetic patience to be relieved of their abundant supply of milk. They saw the men take their one-legged milking stools from the fence. Soon they heard on the quiet evening air the intermittent rattling sounds, as the rich streams of milk bombarded the sonorous sides of the large tin milking pails.

The unusually long silence was at length broken by Stapleton. In a low, almost sad, tone he remarked:

"I believe, after all, that those simple farmhands are better off than we are."

"What makes you think that?" asked Selby, in the same subdued way.

"I hardly know whether I can give an intelligent reason.

They have no responsibilities. They do their daily work, eat their three meals a day, sleep well at night, and on the morning the same thing is repeated—no care, no anxiety, no worry—”

“No examinations,” put in Claude. Frank took no notice of the interruption.

“—No worry. The irresponsibility of their position makes me envy them.”

“Umph! You’re in the dumps, that’s sure. And they probably envy us just as much as we, or at least you, envy them,” replied Selby.

“That may be. But it seems to me theirs is the happier lot.”

“What a—what a strange idea!” said Selby. “Would you change places?”

“Well, I hardly think I would do that,” answered Frank, “yet I do envy them their freedom from responsibility, while I feel ours, mine, I mean, to be great.”

“Indeed! In what way?” asked the other.

“In this. We, I mean I—for I don’t know how the rest of you feel about it—I feel a grave responsibility resting on me. I look at it in this way. I have had all the advantages of education a first-class Catholic college gives. When I go out into the world, after to-morrow’s graduating, I shall have not only the reputation of my alma mater to sustain, but I feel that I am responsible to Almighty God for the good use to which I shall hereafter put my training and what education I have. One’s responsibilities increase in proportion to the advantages he has received.”

“Quite true,” said Hunter. “One having a knowledge of philosophic principles and Catholic ethics must, by the

very nature of the case, be superior to, and exert a superior influence over those who are drifting along almost aimlessly through life."

"We have passed our examinations and shall be graduated to-morrow," remarked Winters, "and yet how little one seems to know, after all."

"Seems?" said Stapleton. "How much do we know?"

"Much more than you imagine at present, my dear boys," said Mr. Shalford, who had come upon the group unawares and had heard the remarks of the last two speakers. After having been warmly welcomed, he took a seat among them and continued:

"Wait, Claude, until the occasions arise when you will have to make decisions for yourself—then you will see the value and the benefit of Catholic ethical training. No knowledge, once acquired, is really lost. Only yesterday I was reading 'Thomas and Matthew Arnold' by Sir Joshua Fitch, and on one of the pages, I do not remember which just at present, I read something like this:

"'If we forget even our arithmetic and geography and grammar, so is a great part of the knowledge received by learners in all ages, and in reference to all subjects. But this does not prove the acquisition barren and useless. It may not survive in the exact form it has been imparted. But it has for a time served its purpose. It has helped to put the mind in a better position to acquire further knowledge, and has left behind it a residuum of thought and experience that will make it easy to revert to the subject and learn it anew, if occasion should arise. In fact nothing which is honestly learned, and which forms a legitimate part of a scheme of instruction having an organic union and a clear purpose of its own, can ever

be rightly regarded as worthless; and no time spent in acquiring such details is ever wasted, even though they may have disappeared from the memory and left no visible result.

“‘It does not follow,’ says Thomas Arnold, ‘that when a man lays aside his Latin and Greek books, he forgets all that he has ever gained from them. This, however, is so far from being the case that even where results of a classical education are least tangible and least appreciated, even by the individual himself, still the mind often retains much of the effects of its early studies in the general liberality of its tastes and comparative comprehensiveness of its views and actions.’

“So don’t be discouraged, boys,” Mr. Shalford continued when he had finished quoting. “What is here said of the classics can be applied more accurately to philosophy, especially in the formation of correct judgment. You have had instilled into you these sound and correct principles. These are capable of guiding you through life. I grant that you have greater responsibilities than those less favored, but you know better how to act and what to do than others. Isn’t that so, boys?”

All gave a ready assent.

“Very well. That’s enough on that subject. Now let me say a few words that I would like to have said to all the members of your class. I was too busy lately to get you all together, so what I say now to you four I say to all through you. I thank you in my own name and in the name of the college for your good influence. I told you in the beginning of the year that you ten boys would make the tone of the college. You have done so, and you have done it well. I thank you all. Your honorable

combination, as you call it, for the autumn field-day, did wonders in this direction—much more than you lads are in a position to know. Your influence was good, and it will remain. Once more, I thank you."

Mr. Shalford's earnestness and warmth of manner and words of sincere praise deeply affected these earnest, right-intentioned boys. In after years it was a happy memory, making a binding link of friendship and esteem between them and their prefect which was never broken. Kind-hearted Shalford knew how to say the right thing at the right moment.

"Do you consider the tone of the college up to the standard, Mr. Shalford?" asked Howard Hunter, who had, in this matter, a little of the pessimism of youth, owing perhaps to his lofty ideals.

The official did not answer immediately. He appeared to be thinking deeply. Presently, without directly responding, he said:

"Somewhere in Fitch's book, ah! here it is," and he turned to the page, "I will read this and then ask you whether you think such a state of affairs exists at St. Cuthbert's:

"That is properly a nursery of vice where a boy unlearns the pure and honest principles which he may have received at home, and gets in their stead others which are utterly low and base and mischievous; where he loses his modesty, his respect for truth, and his affectionateness, and becomes coarse and unfeeling. That, too, is a nursery of vice, and most fearfully so, where vice is bold and forward and presuming, and goodness is timid and shy and exists as if by sufferance; where the good, instead of setting the tone of society and branding with

disgrace those who disregard it, are themselves exposed to reproach for their goodness, and shrink before the open avowal of evil principles which the bad are striving to make the law of the community.'

"Do you think, Howard," continued Mr. Shalford, "do you think such a state of affairs exists at St. Cuthbert's?"

"No, sir; no, sir," said all his listeners.

"No, indeed, thanks be to God! Our boys have their faults. We are not perfect, but goodness, right and correct principles are in honor among us. That this is so this year is largely owing to you boys, and once more I thank you all."

"I don't think the Philosophy class deserves much praise, sir," said Winters. "It's the boys, the whole crowd themselves, that are good fellows. Didn't you see, sir, nearly the whole school go to Holy Communion this morning, the last day of the school year? It wasn't a regular Communion day either."

"I saw it, Claude, and was very glad to see it. Then you don't agree with Arnold of Rugby when he wrote to a friend: 'Give me credit for a most sincere desire to make Rugby a place of Christian education. At the same time my object will be, if possible, to form Christian men, for Christian boys I scarcely hope to make. I mean that from the naturally imperfect state of boyhood they are not susceptible of Christian principles in their full development and practice; and I suppose a low standard of morals in many respects must be tolerated among them, as it was on a large scale in what I consider the boyhood of the human race.'"

"Did Arnold of Rugby say that?" exclaimed Claude. His wide-open eyes and parted lips showed his surprise.

"Yes. You do not agree with him?"

"No, sir!" The emphasis with which these two words were given would have been amusing had not Winters been so earnest.

"Why?"

"Why! If that were true, where would St. Aloysius and St. Stanislaus be? Where would all the good boys in our sodalities be? And our weekly Communicants? Where would be nearly all the boys of St. Cuthbert's of to-day?"

"And where would Claude Winters be?" was the unspoken thought of more than one of the group at the moment, for Claude, in sounding the praises of his companions, was unconsciously describing himself. Mr. Shalford delighted in drawing out Winters, who had a breeziness in stating his opinions which was refreshing. The prefect continued:

"Then you don't believe the affectation of being worse than one really is, exists to any degree here?"

"Certainly I do not."

"Nor the idea that a falsehood if told to a fellow is worse than if told to a professor or prefect?"

"Not by a—not at all." Claude nearly lapsed into a slang expression in his earnestness.

"One more question, Claude. You have read 'Tom Brown's School Days'?"

"Often. I've got it here now," and he took it from the seat where he had placed it a few minutes before.

Mr. Shalford took it and opened it and read with difficulty in the gathering dusk the passage where Mr. Hughes puts into the mouth of Harry East the schoolboy code of honor of those days with regard to cribs.

"It is a fair trial of skill between us and the masters, like a match of football or a battle. We're natural enemies in school, that's a fact. We've got to learn so much Latin and Greek and do so many verses, and they've got to see that we do it. If you can slip the collar and do so much less without getting caught, that's one to us. If they can get more out of you, or catch us shirking, that's one to them. All's fair in war but lying. If I run my luck against theirs and go into school without looking at my lessons, why am I a snob or a sneak? I don't tell the master I have learned it; he's got to find out whether I have or not. What's he paid for? If he calls me up and I get floored, he makes me write it out in Greek and English—very good. He's caught me and I don't grumble. I grant you if I go and snivel to him and tell him I've really tried to learn it but found it too hard without a translation, or say I've had a headache or any humbug of that kind, I'm a snob—that's my school morality. It's served me for these five years, and it's all clear and fair; no mistake about it, and I do not know what we are to come to with any other.'

"What do you think of that for schoolboy ethics, Claude?" asked Mr. Shalford when he had finished the page.

"I know this, Mr. Shalford; it isn't St. Cuthbert ethics. It is not Catholic, and I don't believe it is honest. I don't think it a bit more honest to steal a translation and palm it off in class as one's own than the action of that fellow—oh, what's his name? I've forgotten—who last May gave a poem for the St. Cuthbert's college journal as original when it was afterward found to have been taken body and bones from one of Eliza Cook's. To my

notion, Harry East ought to have been expelled, just as much as that fellow was who disgraced us and our paper. That's my theory of it."

"And perhaps you are nearly correct. There, the lights are beginning to twinkle down below! I must be going. Good-by, boys. Take a last good look at the old college by moonlight. Good-by. God bless you. Keep cool for to-morrow's speeches. Good-by."

As his figure became indistinct down the path in the gloaming, the four boys again lapsed into silence, each busy with his own thoughts. As the darkness fell, more lights began to appear, making the unlit portions of the building blacker by contrast. In the eastern sky were some heavy clouds, which the nearly full moon silvered and made resemble huge banks of snow. To the west, low down on the horizon, was a broad band of saffron, which paled away upward into the deep liquid blue of the summer night. In bold relief against the western sky stood the cross-crowned spire of the students' chapel. In the moon's alchemy the gilded cross resembled burnished silver. It was the most conspicuous object of the softened evening scene. It was more beautiful, thought the boys, than roof, or gable, or flash tower, for it had a symbolic meaning for them. It typified to them their faith, the foundation of all their education, and the motive of all their actions. The stillness of the night, the occasion of their meeting, and the beauty of the scene softly lit up by the moonlight, made a deep impression. They had made a kind of sentimental journey up the hill to take a last look by moonlight of the college they loved so much. They were amply rewarded. The scene was fixed indelibly in their memory.

"Dear old St. Cuthbert's, how I love you!" said Claude Winters, breaking the silence with words that came from the heart, and voicing the emotion of each.

"So do we all," remarked Hunter.

"Amen say I to that," said Stapleton, quite solemnly. "On one thing I am determined. I shall so strive to live that I may never be anything but an honor and a pride to my alma mater."

"I'm sure that's the intention of all of us," said Howard Hunter. "In fact we would be ingrates were we not all actuated by such motives at such a time as this."

"I propose," said Claude Winters, who could never keep in a serious or sentimental mood very long, "I propose that as by this time to-morrow we shall all be scattered to the four winds of heaven—or at least to the four points of the compass, that we make a resolution to meet here on this very spot this time ten years hence and relate our intervening experiences. What d'ye say, boys?" They all agreed unanimously. Then Claude continued:

"Very well; let us all join hands and promise each other that if living and if it be physically possible we all meet here ten years hence."

Four hands were joined in a quadruple handshake, and with this outward manifestation of their agreement, they all made the promise.

CHAPTER XXV.

LEAVE-TAKING.

CLAUDE WINTERS had been seven years at St. Cuthbert's. At last the time had come for him when he must sever connections with the college. Never in his life had the warm-hearted boy been so tossed by contending emotions. There was joy at being free, joy at the thought of seeing home and mother and Laura and all the rest; joy at the thought of beginning his battle with the world. Ah, Claude, will you be so joyful ten years from now? Will you at your proposed reunion—if that ever takes place—have such roseate hues of life as now? You have much to learn yet of the ways of the world. God grant that the next ten years may be as happy as those you have passed, and as decade after decade of your life shall pass, may they bring you no grief, nor sorrow, nor remorse.

During his course Claude had absorbed a large amount of knowledge and acquired some wisdom. He knew he was now competent to take up the study of any profession he might choose, with the brightest prospects of being successful therein.

During this process of absorption the personal all-conquering example of devoted men had largely influenced the boy. He had become deeply attached to his alma mater. He loved every spot in and around it. The class rooms, the yard, the ball-field, the wheel-track, the walks, the river, the very stones of the buildings were objects of affection to him. And his was the love, loyal and true, of a sincere character.

To think that the last day of his happy college life, with all its joys and fascinations and its thousand and one pleasures, would in a few hours be to him a thing of the past, touched him deeply. He could scarcely realize it. He did not wish to realize it. It was the one dark spot in the happy ending of a sunny career. More than once that last morning Claude felt a large lump rise in his throat. More than once unbidden tears dimmed his eyes. For him after to-day the delights of the ball-field, or the bicycle race were no more! For him no more the delights of sweet companionship. Oh, the pity of it, thought Claude. Why could we not be always boys. Why, indeed! What choicer gift can there be than the companionship of noble boys who are loyal and true?

Before the hour arrived for the graduating exercises our young friend took a last journey through the buildings. He went from class-room to class-room, and as he went through each room he felt that he was leaving old friends indeed. His run into the infirmary reminded him of Howard Hunter's long illness, arising from the haunted mill episode, and all the events that followed therefrom. Winters intended these as farewell visits. He knew it would be the last time he could come to these places, because after the exercises there was to be a hurried lunch, and then the hardest part of all for the warm-hearted boy—the final parting with the President, professors, prefects, and his schoolboy friends.

The last spot Winters visited on his sentimental journey was the woodland shrine of Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom. Often had he made little pilgrimages to this beautiful and secluded spot, to seek at Our Lady's feet that help and consolation we all so sorely need at times.

Claude, according to his ordinary style of locomotion, came tearing up the hill at a rapid rate. The path led up to the side of the shrine, and when he had reached the little plateau where it stood, he had to make a sudden turn to the right to be in front of it. About to enter, he checked himself suddenly, for he saw some one kneeling in front of the statue. He whom Claude saw there was the last person whom he would have expected in such a place.

It was Ambrose Bracebridge.

"Ambrose!" That was all he could say. His eyes plainly spoke his wonderment.

"Claude!" Bracebridge arose from his knees and turned to Claude with a frank, open smile on his face. He held out his hand to Winters.

"What does this mean, Ambrose? Are you a—"

"Am I a Catholic you are going to ask?"

"Yes. Are you a—"

"Wait a moment, Claude," said Ambrose. "Let us sit down on this log close here in the shade. I have a few things to say."

"But tell me first, are you a Catholic? Oh, Ambrose, if you are—"

"Listen for a while and then you will hear what I am. Do you remember what you told my father the last time you visited him?"

"I remember nothing in particular."

"Think, Claude."

"Oh, yes, I remember something I said at table, for which I was taken to task quite severely by Hunter afterwards."

That there was an association among a number of you

by which you bound yourselves to pray for my conversion to the faith?"

"Yes, yes. I remember it now. How Hunter did scold for revealing its existence. Why he did so I could not well understand. I could see no earthly reason why it should be made such a mystery. We are not ashamed of it, nor of you, Ambrose."

"I hope not, especially the latter," said Bracebridge. "But let me tell you, Claude, that statement of yours made at my father's table affected him very much; but it had a greater effect on me than on him. Excuse me if I make some plain statements, which under other circumstances might be construed as offensive."

"Go on, go on, old man. You couldn't offend me if you tried."

Bracebridge could not help smiling at this extravagant statement. It was so like Claude.

"Well, when I came here last September, I came with many prejudices—"

"Hold on there, Brosie. Stick to the truth!" interrupted Claude.

"That's the truth. I wasn't prejudiced against the system of studies. I knew that to be of a superior grade. But I was prejudiced against Catholics, who, I thought, represented radically false principles. I was suspicious. I had heard how much religion—and I mean active, live, energetic and real religion—entered into the lives and daily actions of Catholic students. When I came I first expected to find it all a mere superficial something, a conventionality affecting the surface of things, but far from penetrating into one's inner life and actuating one's motives."

"You dear, misguided fellow! You thought we were a sham. You—"

"Wait, Claude, I want to tell you my actual experience. From the first I saw everybody openly and without blushing, daily, in public, say the Incarnation prayers, [Ambrose meant the Angelus]. I watched your solemn church service in the mornings, and I said to myself there must be something real and genuine here. The conduct of one and all at Mass was a great sermon to me. I noticed that those who regularly frequented the confessional were boys whose word was their bond, whose lives accorded with their professions. I soon learned that fun and jollity, aye and even practical jokes, were not incompatible with religious feeling. In fact religion to me now is not the somber, depressing, uninviting affair it had hitherto appeared. The Catholic religion is not the lugubrious affair I had always thought it was. The consequence is that with God's help, I intend to embrace that faith which produces such common-sense results. Anyway it was the religion of our ancestors for fifteen centuries."

"Whoop la! Glory! Hurrah!" shouted Winters, in the exuberance of his delight at this good news. He jumped up from the log where he was sitting, sprang high into the air, and clicked his heels together three distinct times before he reached ground again. Claude had to do something extraordinary to relieve his feelings. Then he became serious again.

"Look here, Bracebridge, I know family petty persecutions over conversions scarcely exist anywhere any more, for there are too many thousands of conversions going on all over the world in these days for that sort

of thing to survive. But have you considered one thing? You are your father's son, you know."

"I never doubted that incontestable fact," replied Ambrose, laughingly.

"Getting smart, aren't you! Well, as your father's son you will inherit his estate and his wealth and position by and by. Will your faith, think you, be strong enough to stand the loss of social prestige? Are you willing to be probably looked down upon because you are a Catholic?"

"What little I know of the world," replied Bracebridge, "tells me your supposition is false. Your assumed position of Catholics might have been true some fifty—even twenty-five—years ago. It is so no longer. A very large percentage in the learned professions in every city of the union is Catholic. Who has not heard of the numbers of famous Catholic scientists? The army and the navy have their share of members of your faith, and this without the slightest loss of prestige in either branch of the service. The same in the arts, and in letters. No, Claude, there is certainly no loss of prestige nowadays in becoming Catholic."

"But my dear friend," answered Winters, "what about the Gregsons, the plagiarists—the 'tough' element?"

Ambrose laughed.

"That is no difficulty. They are undesirable in spite of, and not because of, your system. The individual case gives me no concern. For several months I have been carefully watching results as the effect of a system and it thoroughly satisfies me. With regard to individual cases, you know the Scripture says that scandals must needs come."

"Yes, and 'woe unto him by whom the scandal cometh,'" replied Claude, who continued his queries.

"Do you think you will find difficulty in accepting the doctrines of the Catholic Church? Some things appear very hard, others absurd even, to outsiders."

"Candidly, I do not. I am like thousands of other non-Catholics. We have very little—practically nothing—to unlearn, because very little, or practically nothing, has been taught us."

"This is all just splendid!" said Claude, enthusiastically. "When are you going to be received? After the graduation ceremonies?"

"Impetuous Claude! Scarcely. It was only yesterday I spoke to the President and put myself under his instruction. But wasn't it strange that he should say that he had been expecting me to come and do this very thing?"

"Not at all."

"No? Well, papa is not going abroad this summer, so during vacation I am going to study the question quite thoroughly. Already the President has given me some books and a catechism."

"Let me congratulate you, Ambrose," said the other boy, warmly, and heartily shaking his hand. "From the first time I saw you I liked you. Your conversion to the faith will only rivet the bonds of our friendship more tightly."

Still holding his friend's hand, he continued:

"This makes me wish you were my brother. Ever since I knew you I felt as if you were. The only barrier was the difference of our faith, and I hope that now—"

But Claude did not continue. He squeezed the hand

of Bracebridge and then suddenly turned away. He had a boy's repugnance to any display of emotion.

"I intend to interest Rose in my vacation reading, both for the stimulus it will give me, and for the possibility that it may lead her to think the same way as I do."

"Ah!" said Claude. It was a peculiar intonation. There was, for a moment, a far-away look in his eyes. Neither the tone of that one word, nor his look, nor the "brown study" into which he had fallen and in which he appeared to be building castles in Spain, shall we attempt to analyze. They do not belong to our story, and we simply do not know what they meant.

His reverie was interrupted by the ringing of the big bell calling the students to the hall to witness the closing exercises of the year.

Without speaking Claude clasped his friend's hand once more. Silently, in that woodland shrine, the two knelt at the feet of Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom—a beautiful close to Claude's career as a college student.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CHUDWALLA.

"Look here, young gentlemen, it is not customary for even saloon passengers to take possession of my ship. The first mate caught both of you down in the engine-room this morning, and the steward says that at breakfast time you were in the steerage and now here you are up here on my own private domain."

Two handsome boys, or to speak more correctly, one young man and a boy, in white yachting suits and sailor hats, stood before the captain of a big ocean steamer on the captain's look-out bridge. The youngsters did not appear to take the reproof of the captain very much to heart. The elder one gave what he thought to be a nautical hitch to his pants and tugged at his forelock as he had seen some sailors do. His smaller companion imitated him.

"Ay, ay, sir," said laughing Claude Winters, for it was he.

"Ay, ay, sir," said Ernest, in imitation of his brother. The younger boy thought it was great fun. Both seemed to regard the interview as a scene from "Pinafore."

A good-natured smile spread over the captain's weather-stained features. He had taken a fancy to these two pleasant-faced boys. There was something genial—sunny about them. He kept up a pretence of being severe. Stroking his white side-whiskers to hide too broad a smile, he continued:

"If you want to be sailors for this voyage you have to keep the ship's regulations. You are out of bounds now—isn't that the term they use at college, eh? They did in my day. You have no right to be on my look-out bridge. Here, Mr. Steward," and he shouted to that official, who was just then passing on the deck below, "take these two lambs down and put them in irons for insubordination. Discipline must be observed on my ship."

Ernest looked frightened, and felt very much like crying. Claude took in the situation and with as nautical an "ay, ay, sir," as he could command, began to go down.

"Here you boys, come here," said their father. "Captain, you must put these boys to picking oakum or something of that sort, if they are troublesome to you."

"That's all right, Mr. Winters," replied the laughing captain. "They're good boys. Let them learn all they can, and see all there is to be seen about a big ocean vessel."

Ernest felt relieved. He had taken the captain's words literally, to the great amusement of his bigger brother. The two boys certainly saw all there was to be seen. The thing that pleased Claude the most when out in mid-ocean was the dark-blue of the waters and its marvelous clearness. He would lean over the side of the vessel and gaze long into the calm of the depths below, until he sometimes imagined that the great ship was floating through space, with the material world of waters far below.

The phosphorescent illumination of the wave crests at night was also a source of interest to him. Late into the night he often watched these wonderful effects, as the stately vessel forged ahead with untiring activity.

Claude's impressions of the sea were various. That which seemed to have most influence upon him was its immensity. The large ocean steamer, which, at the dock and motionless, looked so gigantic, appeared to him when in mid-ocean's tremendous expanse to be a small and almost insignificant thing. The vivacious, but after all genuine and thoughtful boy, realized on this, his first sea voyage, how intimately man is directed and controlled by a divine Providence. How especially, it seemed to him, "those that go down to the sea in ships" require this providential care.

This was realized particularly on one occasion when

there came up a considerable "blow," causing the stately vessel to roll and pitch most uncomfortably. Claude, in this storm, was the only one of his party who suffered from "mal de mer."

This was particularly annoying to the young Bachelor of Arts, especially as neither his mother, nor father, nor Laura, his sister, nor even Ernest suffered any inconvenience, and poor Claude was the object of some comical solicitude.

On the afternoon of the third day of the voyage Mr. Winters was sitting on the deck in the shade of the deck-cabin. He had a book in his hand, and from time to time turned over the pages. His reading was only a pretense, for he was in reality intent upon enjoying the deliciously soft breeze of the ocean. He was well pleased with himself. He had gotten away from New York without any extra complications in regard to his boys' safety. He was now, three weeks after Claude had left school, on his way to India, finally to dispose of an affair which had caused him and his wife many anxious hours. In a short time he now hoped to have everything arranged, so that there would be no more cause for alarm or uneasiness.

Looking up from his book, either by chance or perhaps to rest his eyes for a moment, Mr. Winters received a great shock. Not fifty feet away from him, leaning against the capstan of the ship, stood the one man of all others whom he desired the least to see.

That man was Chudwalla!

How and when had the great wizard come on board? How had he concealed himself for so long a time? Not one of the family had the faintest suspicion that the Hindu was in the same ship with them. How had he come

aboard? He certainly had not done this within ten minutes of the ship's leaving her moorings in the river. Nor had he arrived by the ship's tender.

The father of Claude was much surprised. He felt a chill as of some presentiment of impending evil come over him. What did this man want on board? Did his presence portend disaster to all his well-laid plans?

Chudwalla stood leaning against the capstan. With his right hand he was stroking his black silken mustache. At the moment he was perceived he was dreamily looking out to sea.

As Mr. Winters watched his face, seen at the moment in profile, he could but acknowledge that he saw a manly, handsome face. The features were long and regular and clear-cut. The black penciling of the eyebrows helped to throw into prominence the piercing black eyes. The lips were rather thin and coral red, showing off to advantage the rich tawny skin. He was dressed in civilian's plain black clothes, without a particle of color. Dressed as he was in such inconspicuous garments, he would have attracted attention nowhere were it not for the swarthiness of his face.

Suddenly Chudwalla appeared to start out of his reverie. He straightened himself from his leaning position and made as if to take a walking exercise along the deck. He turned and saw Mr. Winters. He gave an almost imperceptible start, checked himself momentarily and then advanced. Raising his hat slightly as he approached, he said in almost perfect accents:

"I believe I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. Winters, formerly of India, and son of Colonel Winters of Simla?"

Mr. Winters, with ill-disguised coldness, arose and bowed. He then motioned the other to a seat.

"You are, my dear sir, probably surprised at two things," began Chudwalla. "First that I should not have appeared among the passengers before this. The reason of this is that I have been recently very much run down by overwork and have been taking the modern American rest cure for a few days in the seclusion of my own cabin, where my attendant has brought me my meals. The second surprise doubtless is that I know your name. You must lay the blame of that to the publicity of the ship's passenger list."

Mr. Winters bowed, but evinced no inclination to afford opportunity for a *tete-a-tete* conversation.

"The name of Winters," continued the other, apparently intent on forcing a dialogue, "has been familiar to me in India from my childhood, and knowing that a Winters was on board, I had but to look at you to be convinced that I saw a son of the old colonel."

Mr. Winters murmured something conventional, ending in "quite delighted," but Chudwalla perceived that it was merely conventional.

"I should regret it extremely if I were intruding on your privacy," he remarked inquiringly.

"Oh, no, I assure you; not in the least."

"Thank you. Then I may say frankly that I am glad we have met. I have often desired to do so. Do you know I once thought I saw you in a New York theater, where I have been giving *legerdemain* performances for nearly a year."

"I saw you once in the theater," replied Mr. Winters.

"Indeed! Then probably it was you I saw after all,"

at the end of the pathway leading from the stage! Yes? How stupid of my man! I sent him out to invite you to see me behind the scenes. He failed to bring you, although he said he followed you to a hotel, but he either had not the courage to address you, or was, perhaps, not sure that you were the person I wanted."

Mr. Winters remembered the circumstance quite well, but he now remained silent. While Chudwalla had been speaking, the father of the two boys had decided on a line of action. He perceived clearly that within the narrow limits of a steamship, Chudwalla could do nothing to endanger his children's safety, whatever might be his plans for the future. In the meantime some understanding might be arrived at. At all events by allowing the Hindu to talk freely—as he seemed inclined to do—he would probably learn his intentions and so would not be acting in the dark when the forced inactivity of the voyage had come to an end.

He therefore determined to talk freely with the conjurer, who appeared to be a well-educated man, and of a decidedly gentlemanly bearing. Only by conversation could he arrive at the knowledge of Chudwalla's intentions. If he were the personification of the revenge of the tribesmen, he was probably also self-interested in the recovery of the yellow diamond. He would hold to his original plan of offsetting one of these against the other. He therefore changed his manner toward Chudwalla.

"I am pleased to meet one who knew my father," he remarked.

"I knew, also, Samaba, the faithful old servant of your family."

"Indeed! You surprise me! You must, then, have lived at Chour, or at Simla?"

"I grew up the friend and companion of his son. On the night that Samaba warned you not to bring your wife and son back to Chour on account of the restless and dangerous state of feeling among the natives, I was within earshot of your conversation in the fort garden. He had come to protect you and your wife and child, and shield you all from danger; I, to protect him."

"All this," said Mr. Winters, "is very interesting. Pray go on. I should be delighted to hear the story of your life."

"My life has been an uneventful one. When a boy I was left an orphan. Samaba brought me up with his son. When his boy died of the cholera, of which we both were sick, he nursed me back to life and soon after adopted me. When I was old enough, he sent me to Calcutta to be educated at a large college there. The wonderful always had a fascination for me. Even when a very small boy, I could successfully imitate some of the illusions of the fakirs. During my stay in Calcutta, which lasted several years, my time was divided between my books and the practice of legerdemain, which, as you know, is held in such esteem—almost veneration—by my own countrymen. I possessed a wonderful faculty for acquiring languages. I read all the books I could secure on necromancy, and I assure you I have read some most wonderful things."

"And have become an expert in the black art?" said Mr. Winters, suspiciously.

"By no means," replied Chudwalla, laughing, "I have nothing to do with occultism or the black art, in which the

aid of evil spirits is invoked. I directed my inquiries entirely to what is known as magic or sleight-of-hand or legerdemain, by which the skill of the performer deceives the observer. I am quite persuaded that ninety-nine hundredths of the effects produced by the Buddhist adepts or so-called mahatmas are mere illusions. Before I finally adopted the wizards avocation as a lifework I traveled largely in Europe, in Asia, and in parts of Africa. My intention was ever to find out some new and wonderful performance which mere human skill could accomplish. With what success I believe you were witness in New York."

"Yes. The results you produced were certainly wonderful, marvelous! I believe you are a friend of Za, the chief of the tribe at Chour, near my father's estate?"

"Yes; for several years I was an inmate of his house, and regarded as one of the family. It nearly broke the old man's heart when he lost that great yellow diamond at the time the little temple on the hill at Chour was attacked."

"I have heard of that uprising," said Mr. Winters, hoping that Chudwalla would continue. "Was it then so valuable a stone?"

"Its intrinsic value was not nearly so great as the fictitious and sentimental value Za attached to it. He was, and even now is, very superstitious. He still attaches great importance to its recovery."

"Do you think that will ever be accomplished?"

"I do not know. I have been searching for it for years. It was owing to the faint possibility of recovering it in the United States that I consented to come over to your country. Za had consulted some yogi, who in a sort of

pretended vision had said the stone was in the land of great fresh water seas. Africa would answer that description equally well with America. I must confess that a desire to see your wonderful country had more influence with me than any well-founded hope of recovering the stone."

"Did you discover any trace of the jewel?"

"Not a ghost of a trace. It is ten times more probable that—as your people say—one would discover a needle in a haystack. I am sorry for Za's forthcoming disappointment. Just imagine, Mr. Winters, the improbability of discovering a solitary, unidentified—and probably stolen—diamond among seventy or eighty millions of people and in so vast an area."

"What made you search for it then?" asked Mr. Winters.

The wizard shrugged his shoulders and turned the palms of his delicate hands outward. If he had a reason, he did not, evidently intend to reveal it. Then he seemed suddenly to change his mind and spoke freely.

"For hope of gain. You are aware Za promised some very rich land—and I know that he has the absolute rights of its disposal—to him who should return the diamond. I confess that I very much wish to get possession of that land."

This was just what Mr. Winters wished might be.

"You admit, sir," said Mr. Winters, "that the prospect of finding this celebrated diamond in America was exceedingly slim, yet you have spent nearly a year in that country. Am I not correct when I surmise that there must be other reasons for your long sojourn there?"

"Your surmises are correct. There were; one I have

mentioned—my love of travel and of seeing new sights and new people. Yours is a wonderful people, in everything the antithesis of mine. The genius of your people is what some of you aptly term go-a-headitiveness; ours is conservatism. Your people want to know the answer to the why and wherefore in all that is wonderful and strange; ours, on the contrary, are content to know of the existence of the fact. You are progressive; we are stationary. In one thing only do I see that you at all resemble us. Both countries have the extremes of wealth and destitution, and the extremes of learning and utter ignorance. Excuse me, perhaps I am wandering from your question. Yes, love of travel, and a vague hope of recovering the diamond were motives which brought me to America; but there was a third reason, and one that affects you, sir, and your family most closely.”

“Ah!” Had Mr. Winters’ life depended on it he could not have resisted this exclamation.

“You probably remember when your father, Colonel Winters, demolished the Hindu temple on his property at Chour, our people—and I say ‘our’ because I had been adopted into Za’s tribe—our people swore to wreak their vengeance on the Winters’ family. They dared not touch your father, nor you, but it was decided to steal and hold as hostage your son. I was instructed by several of the older men of the tribe to bring about this result. To the credit of Za, it must be said that he was utterly and radically opposed to the project. But perhaps I tire you, Mr. Winters?”

“No, no, no. Go on, sir, if you please, go on, go on,” said he, breathlessly. His brain was in a whirl. Should he have this smooth talker arrested! The ship was still

under United States laws. The captain would certainly listen. Confessed complicity in a conspiracy to kidnap. He really did not know what to do at the moment.

"Well," continued Chudwalla with the utmost coolness, "I weighed the matter very carefully and came to the conclusion that while in the United States, at least, I could effect nothing. My spare time between my performances was devoted to rest, or to searching for the diamond. If that were found there was certain remuneration. If your son were stolen by me, I imagined that with your marvellous detective system, I should never get the lad safely into India, but probably get myself into very serious trouble instead. I must confess that I looked for him occasionally in a desultory kind of way, but really I saw little probability of success. Then, you see, there was no particular reward offered for the boy's capture, and—"

"Upon my word, sir," interrupted Mr. Winters, *very* excitedly.

"I beg of you not to get excited," was the counter-interruption.

"Not get excited! Not get ex— When the safety of my own boy, and the peace of my own family for all these years have been at stake!"

"Now, please don't—don't get excited. It really isn't worth while."

"I am not of your opinion, sir. I believe it decidedly worth while."

"I have said," continued Chudwalla, in spite of his auditor's fretting and fuming, "I have said that I relinquished the idea of capturing your son—and by capturing I mean putting him in the power of the more vindictive members of the hill tribe—because I saw no money in it.

Money, I confess—to secure money, is my chief object in life now. And to be plain with you, your boy is now and has been completely out of my power. Should he ever be found, for instance, alone in the hill country in India—ah, that would be a different matter. But as that will scarcely happen, you have nothing to be uneasy about.”

“Upon my word, sir,” said Mr. Winters again, “this cool, deliberate manner of discussing an enormous crime is exasperating.”

“It all depends, my good sir, on the point of view. If by kidnapping your son, or anybody’s else’s son for that matter, I could make as you Americans say ‘a big stroke,’ believe me I should not hesitate to make the attempt, and be prepared to face success or failure with equanimity.”

Mr. Winters recognized that the polished speaker before him, so unlike the ordinary Hindu, was eager and anxious only to acquire money—eager with a Semitic persistency. He therefore determined to play his last card, which he knew to be a high trump. If this failed, he decided to have the wizard arrested either at once, if the captain of the vessel would act in the matter, or at the first port they reached.

“You tell me that the acquisition of money is now the chief consideration with you?”

“Candidly, the chief and only consideration. I have seen too much squalor and misery ever to despise it again.”

“Now, sir, I am not by any means sure that I ought to enter into any negotiations with you. On the contrary, I believe I ought to institute proceedings against you.”

Chudwalla smiled a dark, significant smile and his white teeth beneath his black mustache seemed to grate. He did not speak, but bowed expectantly.

"But what would you do if I were to show you a sure way of recovering the diamond?"

"Recover the diamond!"

"Yes."

"The real Eye of Brahma! What would I do? Do? I would do anything—everything, everything!"

This time it was Chudwalla who was excited. Winters, his plan promising success, became cool. The wizard's wonderful black eyes now fairly sparkled with excitement. Two vivid red spots had mounted to his cheeks. His hands trembled.

"I would do anything," he said, "to get that diamond. Where is it? Do you know? Speak, speak."

"Not so fast, my friend. I beg of you not to get excited. It isn't worth while," said Mr. Winters, unintentionally using almost the same words that Chudwalla had addressed to him a few minutes before. The wizard saw the unconscious humor of the situation, and, excited though he was, burst out laughing.

"The tables are turned, surely! But tell me—tell me how I may recover that diamond and I will be your friend forever."

The man who had for years suffered so much anxiety, looked for a few moments into Chudwalla's eyes, as if he would read therein this strange man's innermost soul. The look was appealing—as from one man to another. But he was baffled. Those dark eyes, prominent now in their excitement, revealed only this excitement. There was really no human sympathy in them. Mr. Winters

saw that sentiment, or a father's anxiety, would be no factor in the solution of the case. He therefore took a mere business view of the case. He would get as much value for his money as he could.

"Now, Mr. Chudwalla, you seem to be a man of the world, with a remarkable eye to the 'main chance' as we say. It must be quite evident to you that I have a motive in offering this suggestion."

"Of course. That is plain. Enable me to recover that diamond and I will accede to every wish of yours. Mine is chiefly a mercenary motive, I grant, but, believe me, there is sentiment also. I loved and love old Za. He has been a father to me for years. Nothing, I know, would give him greater pleasure than the recovery of that bit of carbon upon which he places so extraordinary a value. I could perform no more gracious act for the old man than this."

"Umph! Sentiment and graciousness do not seem to enter into your calculations when a father's and mother's peace of mind, or a son's safety are concerned."

"My dear sir, you forget the different conditions. You and your family are strangers to me—have no claim on me. So far as you are concerned it is with me merely a business consideration. Excuse me for speaking so plainly. With Za and myself it is different. I love the old man. He has been another father to me as I have told you."

"I think I perceive the distinction you would draw. Of course you can easily understand, that while not averse to assisting you it is for my own benefit that I do so."

"I quite understand."

"Very well. Placate thoroughly the native population

at Chour in favor of my family, assure me that the notion of and desire for revenge is obliterated, render it absolutely safe for my children in the vicinity, and—”

“And you give me the diamond?”

“It will be forthcoming as soon as I and the English officers at Simla are satisfied. You will proceed at once to Chour. I remain in England for some days. Three weeks will be sufficient. I come at once to India when I hear from my friends at Simla.”

“I promise, I promise!” said Chudwalla, eagerly, and Winters knew he would keep his word. “I am the greatest man in the tribe, next to Za. The natives regard me with something like superstitious awe as a wonder worker.”

“Very good. You will find, I believe, your tribe not so difficult to manage now as formerly, for the Sisters of Mercy are already established there.”

“What! Those female Brahmins of your religion! Your women mendicants who feed the old and the young! Then my task will be so much the easier. When even the money-getting men of your nation hold these wonderful women in veneration, what will not the simple and unsophisticated natives of the hills do? I promise. You shall see how Chudwalla can keep his word.”

Just at that moment Claude and Ernest, with their arms entwined around each other's shoulders, came skipping along the deck. They did not see the two men until close upon them.

Ernest looked up first.

“Oh, oh, Claude! There's Big Eyes. Oh, I'm so frightened!” and Claude felt the little fellow tremble. “He is talking to pa, too. Will he take him away?”

"No danger of that, Ernie. Don't be afraid. He can not hurt you, now," said Claude.

"Let's run away," said Ernest.

"Here, Claude, Ernest, come here," called their father, just as they were on the point of beating a retreat.

"My two sons, sir," said the father to Chudwalla, who shook hands with the boys, but did not speak. Seeing that the two lads were nervous, their father soon dismissed them. He then said:

"Will you oblige me by explaining one thing?"

"Certainly, if I can."

"Why did you attempt to kidnap my younger son last September at St. Cuthbert's college?"

"I see now it was your son, although not the eldest, whom I took to the hotel that day. Then I was not very sure. I told you before that I had no heart in this work. The boy was evidently too young to be the one wanted. Then the lad took my fancy, for he has a bright, cheerful, good face, and, finally, I thought what would be the parents' grief if I took him away."

Mr. Winters bowed. He was grateful to this strange, mercenary individual who, he perceived, had some feeling.

"One more question, if you please. Claude tells me that a mysterious carriage was supposed to appear at that farmhouse near St. Cuthbert's on the night he had to remain there owing to a bad fall. Had you a hand in that?"

"I had. By that time I had heard that your eldest son was in residence at St. Cuthbert's. I put men to watch for him. I would have carried him off that night had I not discovered in time that three stalwart farmers were guarding the house where he was sleeping. They looked too formidable, so I abandoned my plan."

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOW IT ENDED.

OUR story is told. There remain only two or three things to say. Chudwalla, of course, kept his word with Mr. Winters. It was to his own interest to do that. One sultry evening in the middle of August, Za, Chudwalla and Mr. Peter Jenkinson, the buyer of animals and the purchaser of freaks for the American amusement syndicate, were once more seated on the luxurious cushions in the chief's bungalow. Jenkinson, the globe traveler, had wandered around to Chour in time, for in some mysterious way he had heard how the diamond had been most unexpectedly recovered. Although he had now lost all hope of securing some of the valuable land which the chief had promised to the one who should restore the precious stone, yet he had curiosity enough to induce him to be present at the ceremony of restoration. He had learned also that Mr. Winters, whom he had met in the New York hotel had endowed the hospital and dispensary of the Sisters of Mercy. He intended to be present at the formal opening on the morrow. The group was larger than the one which had met in the same room over a year before, at the beginning of our story. A happy father and two sons were also present.

Mrs. Winters could not be persuaded to attend. She had suffered too much mental torture for any desire to see the originators of it. She had no aversion to meeting Za,

the Hindu chief, but she could not bring herself to exchange courtesies with Chudwalla, whom she considered the cause of all her and her husband's anxieties for the last twelve months.

Servants lit the spirit lamp on the spiral tripod under the brass dish of sandalwood, and very soon the room was filled with delicious aromatic vapor. Za remembered Mr. Winters as the Little Sahib. He also had a good recollection of the Great Sahib—Colonel Winters. The chief insisted upon Mr. Winters taking the seat of honor next to himself. His two irreverent boys burst into a hearty laugh when they saw their father, in Oriental fashion, sink into a pile of soft cushions.

"Oh, papa," said Ernest, "do please cross your legs. You will make a fine picture of the Grand Mogul, or an excellent model for a clay idol."

Chudwalla was in high spirits. He was, through the instrumentality of Mr. Winters, about to become the owner of several hundred acres of fine land, for the chief had already signified his intention of keeping his promise to the one who should restore him the diamond.

Za appeared to remember all that had passed at the previous interview. He remembered that Jenkinson had promised to show Chudwalla a greater American wizard than he himself was. He asked the conjurer whether the agent had kept his word.

Chudwalla assured him that Mr. Jenkinson had done so. Jenkinson had taken him to Orange, New Jersey, and had introduced him to the greatest practical inventor of the world, and Chudwalla told the simple old chief all the wonders he had seen.

"But did he keep his promise to show to you that you

could hear a man speaking five hundred miles away? Is such a wonderful thing possible?"

"Quite possible," answered Chudwalla. "More than once I heard a man speaking to me who was more than five hundred miles away."

"Wonderful! And can these Western people carry their voices around in boxes?"

"Certainly. I have often seen that, and what is more wonderful, the music of a whole band, horns, flutes, and drums, and cymbals, and all, can be boxed and produced at will. It is wonderful."

The old chief looked incredulous.

"The Sahib must have a wonderful country."

The two boys never realized how wonderful are some of our American inventions until now.

Then came the restoration of the diamond to the chief. Mr. Winters had allowed Claude to restore the diamond to Chudwalla, who, in order that he might claim the reward, was to give it personally into the hand of Za.

When Claude took the precious Eye of Brahma from his vest pocket, and, relieving it of the tissue paper wrapping, held it up to the light between his finger and thumb, the old chieftain became extremely excited. He trembled with eagerness to possess it.

"My treasure! My precious Eye! My talisman!" he said, as he stretched out his long bony fingers to grasp it. Claude stepped back a couple of steps. He did not know what might happen.

"Oh, you will restore it, young Sahib! It is my life! my treasure! my fortune! It also has brought me good fortune! Give it to me—give—give,

It appeared as if he doubted whether the Winters were

in good faith after all. The veins on his forehead swelled and stood out like small cords. His sallow, wrinkled face became livid. Great drops of perspiration gathered on his brow. He trembled visibly.

"I did not promise to give it to you, but to Chudwalla," said Mr. Winters.

"But it is mine, mine!—my talisman!"

His misery seemed acute. The scene was becoming too intense for the nerves of all. At a signal from his father, Claude stepped forward and put the diamond into Chudwalla's hand. Za's eyes, with an eager, hungry look in them, followed the boy's every motion. He was somewhat relieved when he saw the diamond in the possession of Chudwalla, but his mind was not fully at rest as yet.

With his long claw-like fingers still stretched out, he looked eagerly—half-doubtingly—into the face of the wizard. What would that strange and apparently heartless man do? Would he claim a right to it, and keep the precious stone after all? All doubt and anxiety were soon set at rest. Chudwalla rose from his cushions, and kneeling before the old man, took his trembling hand in his.

"My father," he said, with more feeling than Mr. Winters imagined he ever possessed, "my father, be happy. Take back your lost treasure. May all good fortune return with it!"

He took the old man's hand in his left, put the diamond into it and closed the fingers over it, pressing them slightly as he did so, to convince the chief, by the sense of touch as well as that of sight, that he had actually regained his talisman and treasure, the Eye of Brahma.

* * * * *

The following morning, August 15, a beautiful sight was witnessed in the little domestic chapel of the Sisters of Mercy at the hospital, not half a mile away from the home of the Hindu chief. The community of Sisters were devoutly kneeling at Mass. Lights and palms and wonderful flowers beautified the little sanctuary. Several Catholic officers and their wives, guests of the Winters, were present. In the rear of the chapel also knelt the non-Catholic Jenkinson. It was the first time he had ever been present at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and like all fair-minded Americans in a similar position, he was deeply impressed.

To the Catholic visitors his attitude would have been amusing, had they not seen in him an evident desire to be respectful. He sat with his body bent forward, and with his hat, into which he looked piously, placed before his face. Whether he prayed into it or not it is hard to say. Ernest, who had never seen an old style Protestant at his devotions before, was much surprised, and only repressed an audible giggle when he caught the stern look of his father's eye. Jenkinson was in earnest, for when at the sublime moment of the Elevation of the Host he saw everybody in the chapel bow low and reverently adore, he, almost unconsciously, dropped on his knees.

"I don't know what came over me," he said afterward, "but I simply had to get on my knees, and I tell you, gentlemen, it's a long time since I have been in that position."

He was even more impressed when he saw the Winters family, father, mother, Laura, Claude, and Ernest, kneel together at the altar steps and receive Holy Communion as a thanksgiving for dangers and anxieties past, and in

prayer for blessings for the future. Nor was he less impressed when the good Sisters—whom the natives already loved and whom their children fairly adored—came two by two with devout and modest motion to receive the same Celestial Food, the only source of strength and courage in the tireless round of duties of their arduous vocation.

At breakfast, which was served on the shady veranda of the convent-villa, Mr. Jenkinson remarked—and those who heard it say there was a strange earnestness, almost wistfulness, in his voice—"I have little or no religion, but if I became anything I certainly would be a Catholic. I wish I could be one. At all events I have learned something to-day. I have often wondered why so many Catholic families seem so much happier than other people. It seems to me that it is on account of their religion. To see you, sir, and your family so united at that church service this morning was a lesson to me. I wish I could bring about the same thing in my family. This is my last trip around the world, and I believe I'll try it when I get back to New York."

* * * * *

That afternoon was the day of the formal opening of the hospital and dispensary. The Sisters' school children had a holiday and it was a gala day for the residents and the natives.

The variety of costumes and the different colors of the various races there present revealed a picturesque scene. The beautiful park of Mr. Winters' former residence, now the convent grounds, was admirably adapted to the pur-

poses of a fête on a large scale. Of course Claude and Ernest came in for a large share of attention, for most people knew the circumstances under which they had come all the way from the States.

Many natives were on the grounds, and expressions of good-will for the Sisters and toward the Winters family were numerous. Mr. Winters, viewing the animated scene under the large shade trees, and noting the change of manner toward him, even by the older Hindus who had been in years gone by chiefly instrumental in stirring up the natives against him and his family, realized how wise had been the advice of his New York lawyer.

The evening shades at length settled down over the grounds. The last of the visitors had gone. Mr. and Mrs. Winters were chatting with their Simla guests in the large drawing-room of the older villa across the park, which had once been the residence of Colonel Winters, and was now, as the reader remembers, a summer villa used by the officers of the garrison at Simla during the heated term. Claude and Ernest were sitting on the steps of the veranda, trying to catch a little breeze, for it was a very sultry night.

"Where are the boys, mamma?" asked the now radiant Winters, of his wife.

"I believe they are on the veranda. I saw them a moment ago," was the reply.

Mr. Winters went to the glass door leading out to the porch.

"Are you there, Claude?" he asked, peering into the darkness.

"Yes, sir," said the elder boy, jumping up at the sound of his father's voice.

"Well, here's a letter for you from St. Cuthbert's. From some bosom friend, I suppose. It came this afternoon by the runner, but I was so busy with the fête that I forgot to give it to you before. Please excuse me."

Claude lit the porch lamp and saw by the address that the letter was from Ambrose Bracebridge. It contained the glorious news for Claude of his friend's reception into the Church. Claude read on in a transport of delight.

"I believe," ran a portion of it, "that to-day I am the happiest man living. I could not have believed so much joy could have entered one's heart had I not experienced it. My only regret is that you were not present to share it with me. The good old President was pleased to say that he found me better instructed than he had anticipated, and saw no reason for delaying my conditional baptism. So I was baptized on the third Sunday of July. Father and mother and Rose were present in the college chapel at the ceremony. Rose was much impressed and I have great hopes of her.

"And now, dear old Claude," the letter continued, "I have some bad news for you. You are so far away out of the world—our world—just at present, that it is more than probable you have not heard of the death of poor Gilkins."

"What's this? what's this? Surely I must be dreaming," and Claude rubbed his eyes to make sure that he was not. Going near to the entrance lamp to see better, he read on.

"His death happened, as far as I can learn, in this way. You know his home is a few miles out of a large city. He went to town one Saturday evening to visit a brother. About nine o'clock he went to the nearest church to go to confession, telling his brother's wife that he would be

back about ten, as he was going to confession, intending to receive Holy Communion the next morning. He told her it was his intention to receive every Sunday during the vacation. Those who saw him in the church during his preparation said afterward that they were impressed by his earnestness and piety. He stayed till quite ten in the church, making a long thanksgiving and preparation for Holy Communion.

"When he came out it was very dark, and a light rain was falling. It seems he walked half a block away from the church and from the electric light and then determined to cross the street. Not being over-familiar with the speed of the electric cars, or perhaps being distracted, he did not notice the rapid approach of one. When he heard the conductor's gong, he made a quick step to get out of the way. The pavement was wet and slippery. He slipped and in a moment he was under the wheels of the car. He lived but half an hour, but long enough to receive the last sacraments. At the last, when he was losing consciousness, he kept repeating, 'Oh, Ernie, Ernie, don't, don't, don't!' What could he mean by that? Very, very sad, isn't it? Poor old Gilkins! and he meant so well, too. Papa and mamma are very much grieved over his death."

"Ernie," said Claude, very softly, "big Gilkins is dead, killed by a street car."

"What! Dead! Gil—" but the boy stopped, unable to speak. For a long time he was silent. Claude did not disturb him. Sitting there on the veranda steps, Ernest cried long and quietly. His brother waited for some time, wondering at the strange silence. Then he sat down next to his brother.

"Do you know he was calling your name just before he died? Why! Ernie, you are crying!"

"Did he? I am glad of that. What did he say?"

"Some strange words—'Oh, Ernie, Ernie, don't, don't, don't!' What did he mean by that?"

Little Ernest now sobbed unrestrainedly.

"I never told you, Claude," and the weeping boy timidly rested his tear-stained face on his brother's shoulder, but seemed afraid to look him in the face.

"Told me what, Ernie?" said Claude, affectionately. "Surely you have not been getting into trouble."

"It's past, but it's a hor-horrible story," sobbed the boy, "and I'm ashamed even to mention it. I try not even to think of it."

"Why, Ernest, what on earth are you talking about?"

"About an awful time, and what poor Clarence did. Oh! I'm going to pray for his soul all my life," said the weeping boy, fervently. "I never told you about it, Claude, because it was too bad. There was a time last spring when I was an awful bad boy in the small division yard at school. I got in with a crowd of bad boys—and they were bad, too!"

"Oh, Ernie! why did you not let me know? I'm sure I could have helped you."

"But I didn't. Don't you remember I kept away from you a good deal last March, and you scolded me for it?"

"I know for a time I did not see much of you, but I never dreamed anything was wrong."

"Well, that was the time. I, somehow, got mixed up with these fellows. I smoked sometimes, and some of them used awful bad language and swore, too, sometimes."

"And you?"

"I didn't give way to any bad talk, nor swear either, because both are too dreadful, but I listened very often. Then I neglected my lessons and I had a lot of penances and my notes were low in that competition, and when I went to confession I didn't feel half sorry and I was pretty miserable, and—"

"And you never told me anything about all this. Oh, Ernie!"

"I was afraid."

"But what has all this to do with poor Gilkins?"

"Lots, Claudie. It was just he that did it all for me."

"What are you talking about? Gilkins swear and talk bad! Nonsense!"

"No, no, no. You don't understand. He helped me."

"Helped you—in what?"

"Helped me to break away from those boys. One day I was near the division fence between the two yards. Clarence heard me say something he didn't like. I don't know what it was now, but I know it wasn't swear words, 'cause every time I felt like using them as the others did I thought of mamma and Laura, and then I just couldn't. That always checked me in time. When Gilkins heard me say something across the fence, he said:

"'Oh, Ernie, that's terrible! Wait there, Ernie, and I'll get permission, and I'll come round and talk to you.' In five minutes he came and we went for a walk. When we had got away from the college he began to talk quite seriously to me."

"What did he say?"

"He told me how my conduct would hurt you, Claude, if you were to hear of it; how it would pain papa and

mamma, and, above all, how it would lead to things wrong and sinful."

Claude Winters felt an unaccountably large lump rising in his throat, and for a moment he could not see the stars clearly. Ernest went on:

"Then he begged me, for your sake, to have nothing more to do with the rough boys in the small yard. And, oh, he pleaded so earnestly, Claude! When I promised him, he up and kissed me on the brow just like mother does when we kneel every night for her blessing before going to bed. He would not leave me until I had promised to go to confession that very night. He was big and rough, but oh, Claude, he was so good!"

"Oh, Ernest, Ernest! All this, and you never came to me through it all! God bless poor Gilkins!"

The little boy again laid his head on his bigger brother's shoulder. Once more he wept undisturbed.

Claude was horrified at the revelation of how near his brother's first year at St. Cuthbert's had been to a moral tragedy—how nearly the fine gold had been dimmed.

Bread cast upon the waters shall be seen after many days. Surely no good deed is lost; no influence that makes for good is wasted.

In all his gratitude to Gilkins for the good he had done to Ernest, Claude Winters was utterly unconscious that it was he himself that had been chiefly instrumental in enabling the big boy to have an influence for good. It was farthest from his thoughts to dream that the assistance given to his own brother at a critical period of his school life, never would, nor could, have been exerted, had it not been for the influence of his own uprightness and manly character on Gilkins.

Thus the shadows which had brooded for so long a time over the family of Mr. Winters were lifted because of his kindly deeds to the native Hindus; and a more portentous shadow, which at one time threatened the moral life of Ernest, was dissipated by the influence of one whose character had been moulded largely by Claude himself. Thank God that in our Catholic colleges there are many, many such noble boys as Claude Winters of St. Cuthbert's.

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